A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL

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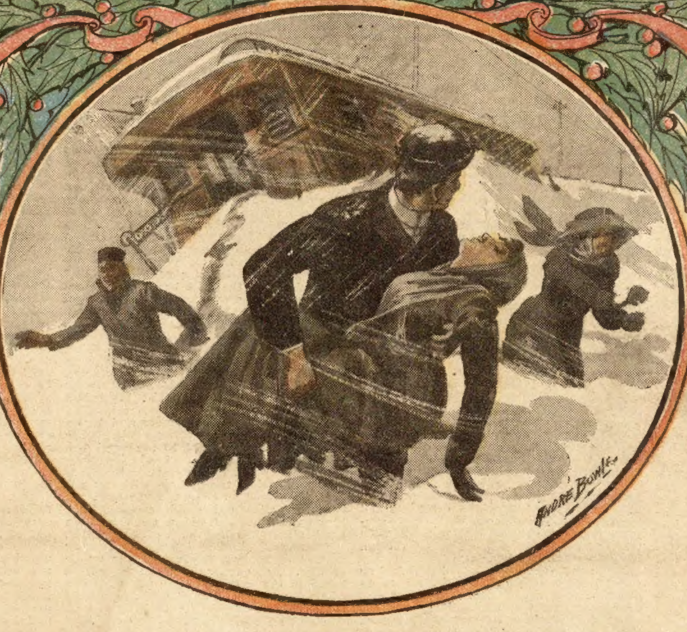
My Strange Christmas Journey

By CLARA PARKER



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PART I.

IT WAS the most extraordinary journey I have ever taken. I had promised Cousin Kate to go down and eat my Christmas dinner with her. Of course, Kate is all right, mighty good-looking, I can tell you. But then you see she had married such a bore—lots of money, of course, but full of notions about his stomach; kept Kate shut up in the country most of the time, because he seemed to need a quiet life to digest his dinners.

"Do come down, like a dear old thing," Kate had written, "and help us eat our way through that awful dinner. William's family will be here to a man. There's not a blot against them in the criminal records of our town; but, let me tell it, there's not a sound stomach to be mustered among them all. I want to see some one eat who does not think of my puddings as 'starchy substance not to be penetrated successfully by the gastric juices.' Great Heavens! What are we made with juices at all for, I wonder? Do come, and I will rake the country for a pretty girl to make you forget the neck-bones of William's sisters."

"It's an infernal shame!" I said, when I had finished the letter.

I didn't mean the neck-bones, in particular; though, of course, I reckoned them in vaguely, but it was Kate's marriage that I referred to more especially. Pity they hadn't dug up a better match for her. I always thought young Thornton had enough to make them comfortable, but I guess even Kate sat down on his offer. He was about the best waltzer I ever saw, though, and as far as I ever heard never showed any symptoms of a disordered stomach.

I wrote a note to Kate that I would come; then forgot all about the thing until fifteen minutes before train time, when it rushed over me just as I was telling Nell Brown how pretty she looked at a fancy-dress ball, the night before. I think Nell was getting ready to blush. She has a very large circle of gentleman friends, Nell has, and her blushes come slowly.

"Do you know I am afraid you are very insincere," Nell had got out, when suddenly I shouted, "Jerusalem!" at the top of my voice, and began pawing about for my hat.

As in a vision I had suddenly seen poor Kate, her handsome face gazing dismally at me, while before her was ranged the entire phalanx of Watson stomachs, every one in a more or less fomented state from one of Kate's beloved puddings.

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I may as well mention here that Miss Brown never forgave my vulgar interruption of her little talk about morals, or of the blush, I don't quite know which.

"Awfully sorry—miss train if don't run—Kate's you know——" I spluttered, drawing my right glove over my left fingers, and then I bolted, amiably unconscious that a frosty little "Oh, don't think of trying to explain!" which whistled along after me, seeming to strike me just as I bumped against the footman at the door, meant that I had forfeited my place in Miss Brown's esteem.

Of course, there wasn't a car or a cab in sight when I dashed out onto the street. Never mind. By dodging through a few side streets I could make it yet. I hadn't any real overcoat, just a short nobby affair, fitted for making parlor calls. If it should turn cold I'd be in a fine scrape. Never mind. I wasn't going to disappoint Kate and there was no time now for parley.

Down the street I went at a run. People dodged me; probably thought some one's blood vessels had broken loose and I was running for a doctor.

It's funny how single-minded an excitement of one kind or another will make a fellow. For the moment, my whole soul was set on making that train, and I saw everything about me from that one-sided point of view. Every one seemed going to trains.

A hackman beyond reach of my call whipped up his horse. "He'll make it," I thought, with a jealous pang, as I ran lolling far behind, while I gave up the case of the old apple woman across the way, as she fell sprawling over a core from a rival's rotten fruit, with as much compassion as though I had known for a fact that the poor old thing was trying to make my train in answer to a death telegram.

Probably upwards of two hundred trains passed daily through the depot toward which I was making; yet to me, as I neared the place, every train was my train. An extra loud whistle, and I gave up the job, though I still kept running; and at last the fierce ringing of a bell, possibly down in the stockyards, brought me up on a home run between two tall buildings. There seemed to be a roar of excitement coming from one of the buildings, but it caused me no wonder.

"Probably the hands are making for an out-of-town train," I would have reasoned, had there been any reason left in me, and when, through a basement door, a tall, well-dressed man suddenly shot, dropping a bundle from his hands as he ran, I strained every cord in me in friendly competition to catch up with him.

"He's dropped his bundle, though, 'Twould be a shame for him to have to come back after it," and as I swept past his starting-place I caught up the thing which he had dropped. It was a surprisingly untidy bundle wrapped about with a newspaper. Maybe he had put on a clean shirt at the office and was carrying the other one home to the wash. I had almost a notion to throw it way, but was too confused—with the blood all in my head, as it was, and my lungs working like a leaky bellows—even to be customarily selfish, so merely tucked the thing under my coat and rushed along.

Ha! Some one was coming along at a keen gallop. This was getting droll. Three of us in a line! I even took time for a look over my shoulder at the newcomer, who must have come out of the same side door as the first chap, so suddenly had his feet struck the walk behind me. When I looked ahead again, the first man had disappeared, but I had no time for further wonder.

Dodging between two freight cars, which by divine dispensation didn't smash together for sixty seconds after my coattails had cleared them, I made my way across two tracks, between a switch engine, hinting at immortality, just before me and the loose end of a passenger train more than suggesting a repentance for my sins from behind, and just as the wheels began to turn, flung myself onto my train, hearing, as I did so, the brakeman wrangling with some one who was forcing his way onto the platform just beyond.

It was my second in the race. Poor wretch! He had come without his overcoat, and in a skull cap. He was worse off than I.

I could hear the brakeman jawing him, while I sat damp and breathless, waiting for some one to happen upon the back platform, and let me in. Evidently he didn't fling the other fellow off, as he threatened at the top of his voice to do, and after the train had moved on a little he burst open the back door and came bawling out where I was, having got wind that some one was hanging on behind. I cut short his abuse with a generous tip, and went inside the car.

It was only a stub train, running out to the country depot, which was the nearest approach to anything festive Watson dared get within five miles of. There were only four people on the car besides myself: A slender girl, not over nineteen, I was willing to bet, but closely veiled; a fat woman with her, also closely veiled, a traveling seedsman, or I set him down for that, studying a catalogue of vivid scarlet and green tomatoes; and my running mate, now meekly being bullied by the conductor, who was inquiring, at large, why people will persist in boarding trains without properly providing themselves with tickets.

I sauntered down the aisle, concluding not to sit behind the girl, who couldn't be pretty if she would never give a fellow as much as a squint behind that close black veil.

I had rather planned a jocose greeting of my friend in the skull cap, when suddenly the social grin which had begun spreading about my mouth froze there under the most awful look of curiosity which I ever had directed at me. It came from the man in the skull cap, and hit me just below the lungs.

It was the same kind of a look that youngsters steal behind them at dark corners from which they expect clammy hands to reach and grab for their poor little coat tails before they can be carried beyond reach.

I declare it was as though some one had hit me a blow on the spot, and involuntarily my hand flew directly where his eyes were looking—pale, weak eyes—which seemed to reflect such a ghastly sight that I wouldn't have been surprised to fetch back my hand dripping with blood from an artery burst during my late exercise, but all I felt was the edge of the paper parcel I was still carrying.

Of course it was ridiculous for me still to be carrying the thing about, but yet a corner of soiled newspaper must be a harmless thing to the stranger. Then why, as my hand flew to my coat front, should he suddenly read a newspaper upside down between our faces and hold it there with trembling fingers?

"He must be crazy as a loon," I thought, and with that I picked out a seat a good distance behind him and across the aisle, and settled myself to endure the monotony of a spin into the country.

First I would get rid of that bundle; and dragging it cautiously from inside my coat—for I was ashamed to be seen with such an untidy package—I laid it on the seat, where it suddenly undid before me.

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Great Heavens! What had I stumbled into! A pair of huge black side whiskers and blue goggles—the goggles blue enough and the whiskers big enough to have obscured my head entirely—lay bristling and blinking at me from the red plush seat.

I have had queer nightmares when I suddenly found myself in the midst of polite dancing circles, my feet rigged out in cowhide boots, and have sizzled away a few awful minutes, with every eye centered on my shame, and it was with much such a dreamy sensation of wondering guilt that I eyed the things before me.

I tried to do them up again, but at the first rattle of the paper I started and looked about, in time to find a dull blue eye peering at me around the paper still held upright in the hands of the man in the skull cap.

The women in veils who faced me seemed to be whispering about me? What was wrong? And here was the conductor almost at my elbow! With a nervous sweep of my hand, I poked the whiskers and goggles onto the floor under my seat.

The confounded goggles rattled as they fell, at which the seedsman, holding his fingers between the two pages of cabbages as big as half-barrels and of a poisonous green, turned officiously toward me.

"You dropped something, sir," he said, eagerly. He had been looking for a chance to fasten himself and his catalogue onto some one, and now he had it.

"Not at all," I said, freezingly, for the conductor had stopped beside me.

It wasn't my nature to be reserved, but until those whiskers and goggles were out of sight I had to be. I felt that the conductor was staring down suspiciously beside my legs, but that was nonsense. The seedsman fell back into his seat and opened up a breed of cucumbers that seemed promising a growth, which, if not checked in time, would ultimately choke out all other vegetation.

Now was my time for wrapping up the whiskers and goggles. Stealthily I was reaching for them, when something in the manner of the veiled women diverted me. The fat one was evidently getting excited and the little one was trying to calm her.

I had it. The car was hot enough to sprout the seedsman's catalogues, and the fat woman was strangling! Even while I looked, she made a desperate grab at her veil, which the younger woman seemed to keep down over her.

Good Heavens! What had we got on the train with us? A couple of smallpox victims?

At that the fat woman began swaying in her seat, and polite manhood could wait no longer.

"Let me assist you, madam," I called, running down the car toward them, to the great amazement of the seedsman, who had seen nothing beyond his cucumbers.

The girl was up in the aisle before me, and had her fat friend by the shoulders, evidently trying to urge a little fortitude upon her. "It is nothing, sir," she said coldly to me, and then I heard her whisper, "Oh, auntie, do collect yourself! You can't be smothering. Sit still and I will bring you some water."

It was really alarming to see the convulsions going on behind the fat woman's long black veil. Her shoulders were heaving and settling like a ship on a stormy sea, while a sort of gurgling sound came along with each breath, as if the poor thing had swallowed a hazel nut and had to draw wind around it.

I ran for water, and there wasn't a mite in the cooler, and of course the brakeman and conductor who had been bothering around before had now completely vanished. The door was fastened, and in the meantime the poor fat woman seemed liable at any moment to burst through her clothing in spite of me.

"What shall I do, ma'am?" I asked desperately, studying the blurred outlines of the young girl's face, as she hung on to her friend, who all the time seemed struggling to split her dress in the breaths she'd fetch when it came time for drawing in again.

"Nothing, sir, thank you, nothing!" cried the poor girl, in so sweet a voice that my philanthropy began increasing.

What were they and why did they keep their veils so persistently down? Were they a couple of escaping nuns? My curiosity was fast climbing into the red-hot stages.

Suddenly a chill spread over me. What was that on the floor by my seat? A leg? It surely looked like one. The man with the skull cap had disappeared. Ah, here he came, rising from the floor of the car beside my seat, pale and trembling.

"I dropped my knife," he volunteered loudly to the seedsman, who had lowered his catalogue and was staring at him.

The fat woman had quit swelling herself out and seemed disposed to settle down, so, after a "thank you" from the young lady, which was the same as sending me about my business, there was nothing for me but to go skulking to my seat, well aware that the eye of the man in the skull cap was fastened immovably upon me.

What had brought him down on all fours in under my seat? What had I done that he should follow me about with those glassy eyes of his? Why wasn't I man enough to ask all this from him? I had done nothing to be ashamed of, but what had that to do with the reality of those whiskers and goggles?

"I'll wrap the darn things up and fire them from the window," I thought viciously, and then my jaw dropped. Such trifles as get mixed up in the critical moments of our lives! The newspaper was gone!

The door rattled. The conductor, probably. What if he, too, should go pawing about on the floor beside my seat? At the thought I made a quick grab and had those confounded whiskers and goggles in my coat pocket as stealthily as any street gamin ever secreted a stolen watch.

There, I felt better! Pooh! What a fuss I had been making about nothing!

At the next station the things could be dropped overboard as sly as you please.

How Kate would laugh! I should think that even Watson would crack a smile over a story like that. Come, it wasn't so bad to have gone through a bit of discomfort if only to have a nice yarn for the family dinner.

It was snowing like the deuce though. "I kind of wish I had my overcoat," I thought, yawning comfortably and staring absently at a large page of bloody beets the seedsman held before me.

Thunder and lightning and blue blazes! What was happening to us, anyhow? A long grating sound that nearly ripped every tooth from my head, a confused whistling and ringing, and then I found myself with my head where my heels had been and my heels apparently broken into a glass factory and punching the profits out of the stock with every lunge I made to clear my head from that infernal steam pipe.

I had often sketched out the brave things I would do in case of a railway accident, but then I had always figured on grand, dignified troubles, broken necks, dying confessions, lots of blood.

Who could ever think up such a contemptible mishap as to be standing on one's head inside a car seat, sound as a ball, yet sprawling there helpless as a turtle turned on his back by a bad small boy.

It had grown dark outside, and nothing could be seen inside the car, but plenty could be heard. Two of the passengers were keeping up a lively duet, the fat woman, I guessed, and the man in the skull cap.

"I'm smothering," shrieked the poor lady over and over again, while I wriggled and twisted and fought for the ground with my legs.

"My veil is twisted around my neck and I can't breathe," and then would follow a lot of indefinite shrieks as though the poor thing's reason had broken away.

"My leg's broke! The seat's on my leg!" bawled a voice from the side of the car where the man in the skull cap had been, and then the car itself took another roll, and the next time it stopped I found myself with my head through the hole in the window which my heels had been punching, gazing with dull surprise into the face of a snow bank, with the end of my nose bleeding as though the butchers had been at me.

For a minute or so I seemed to feel as though there was nothing for me to do but to stand there and count over and over four fence posts sticking like so many pegs from the clean white snow. Then I began to feel pretty bad about my nose, wondering how it would look at the Christmas dinner party next day, and whether it was broken or just bumped, the reason it was bleeding so.

After a while I came to a little, and, getting a handful of snow, held it to my nose till it stopped bleeding.

It was perfectly quiet in the car for a moment. Then some one in the car set up such a screeching, such a far-off, dismal, hopeless sound that I forgot there were only men and women in the car, after all, and felt a strong notion to cut through the window and get away from that hideous noise.

Wasn't anybody coming to help us? Hadn't I even a match? Yes, here was a couple in my pocket. I struck one on my boot, and thrust it eagerly out into the darkness before me.

Thunder and lightning! How I jumped, winking out the match as quickly as though a gale of wind had struck it! A horrid sight had greeted me. The seedsman was lying on his back with his mouth wide open, and I had stuck the match between his gaping jaws!

"He's dead!" I said out loud, and then a nervous notion came over me that I must get the poor wretch out into the light where I could look at him better.

It was awful there in the dark with those unknown people! Why didn't some one speak or move about besides me?

"Is any one hurt?" I called hoarsely, but no answer came. Only the dismal screaming went on, so I laid hold of the helpless bulk beside me. Why, the man was nothing but skin and bones, or else my horror of him gave me strength beyond human.

Heavens, what had I done! I had meant to ease him through the window head first, of course, but as gently as you would sort a basket of eggs, but at my first shove on him, when once I had him pointed right, he shot from me as though he were made of so much straw, his heels rattling the last atom of glass from the window, and he landing, head downward, in a bank of snow.

I declare I never felt so shocked in my life before. The cold sweat stood out all over me. I hadn't the courage to climb out after him, but, leaning from the window fished for his stiffly standing legs which seemed to add two more to the black fence posts I had been counting. After all, he was dead, so it didn't so much matter.

Something ought to be done, though, about the women, and so, stumbling and crawling, exploding glass globes under my feet, riding the water-cooler astride for several feet, and collecting a network of broken straps about my legs, I drew nearer and nearer to the faintly screeching voice.

"Madam," I called at a venture. "Miss," I added, when the first brought no sign. Then I stumbled over a pair of heels and fell, striking my head with such force on a seat, that for a few moments, I declare I thought I had lost my reason.

Why, it scares me even now to think how I sat there all alone in the dark and laughed—not out loud, to be sure, but such a silent, senseless chuckle as showed how far down that blow had fetched me.

Then I got up on my knees and began pulling on those sprawling heels. They must belong to the man in the skull cap, but where had the rest of the poor thing's body got to? Remembering how I had felt when tangled up with the car seat, it seemed as though I wouldn't get the poor chap out quick enough, and, bracing my feet, I got a good hold on his heels and jerked with all my might.

Something broke loose. It hardly seemed as though it could be the whole of him. Anyway, down I came with a bump in the bottom of the car with one of his shoes in each hand. The poor man could have no ankle joints to speak of, or else he wore gaiters. Heavens! Had I dislocated him somewhere? It seemed that I must by the sudden noise he set up.

"Who is stealing my shoes?" he roared, kicking out at me in the darkness. He wore white socks, and I could see his feet very plainly as they flew to the right and left, fortunately, on each side of my head.

It was foolish, I know, but I declare I felt so silly sitting on the car floor there with the shoes in my hands under the suspicion of having robbed him of them, that, for the life of me, I couldn't think of a thing to say for myself.

Better leave it uncertain what had happened, and so, dropping the shoes softly, I stole past the kicking heels. Counting on the fellow's not being clear enough of the seat to stop me, I crawled along, hearing him shout in a muffled voice as I left him behind:

"So you would rob the dead, hey? Where is the conductor? Why ain't there lights brought? There'll be some pretty damages out of this, I can tell you!"

Silly as I felt, it was better to have him bawling away than to endure the dreadful stillness of a minute before.

"He'll find his shoes, of course," I thought comfortably, and then I stopped with a little gasp, for almost in my ear burst forth that dismal dreary yell, as though some one were struggling with a nightmare the size of a span of horses.

Flinging out my hand, it struck something woolen, with breath puffing out at me between the meshes. The poor fat woman was still struggling behind her own veil. Where was it caught or pinned? I must tear it off from her that very instant. Each yell was fainter than the last. She might not hold out another minute.

Fumbling about her head, I got hold of what I thought must be the end of the thing, and gave it a jerk, at which every sound stopped as suddenly as if I had cut her throat from ear to ear.

Had I actually strangled her? I forgot everything at that awful fear, forgot how women's bonnets are fastened on, forgot that anything human is beneath them. With both hands I laid hold of the veil, bonnet and all, and tore at everything which seemed to balk me. Ha! I was doing well. I was getting air to her! I would fetch her about all right yet!

See, she would speak again. And in my delight I never stopped to hear what she was saying, until I had the bonnet and a few rags of the veil in my hands, and with sinking sensations about my stomach, which I can't describe, felt the could touch of long soft hairs crawling from in under the veil and winding themselves about my fingers.

What dreadful strength possessed me? Like a wisp of hay the dead man had shot from my fingers through the car window to the snow outside; with my naked hands I had torn shoes not yet unlaced from the feet of a second man; and now here had I all but scalped a helpless woman, when merely trying to get a whiff of air to her.

At that moment, in order that I might be caught in my horrid work, the light of two lanterns shone in at opposite doors, and the voices of the conductor and brakeman bawled in one breath, "Is any one hurt here?" It seemed such a ridiculous question, with a dead man sticking up in the snow outside, that before I knew just what I was about I laughed.

"We do feel a trifle jarred," I called, frivolously. Then a realization of my surroundings suddenly took all the fun out of me.

The car itself didn't look to have a whole light of glass in it, and through the broken panes the snow poured in, helped by a chilly wind which had sprung up and was rapidly changing the heated air of the car to something which matched poorly with my light topcoat.

The man in the skull cap, at the first glint of light, had sprung up and started toward it, but falling over his shoes, which as luck would have it I had set just where they made a trap for him, there he sat, in the middle of a little bank of snow, with his shoes in his hands, trying to force his wet socks into them.

And I, Heaven pity me for an awkward fool, what was I doing? I was standing there in the middle of the wreck, trying to look as though I had never let loose that silly laugh of mine, while I faced the maddest woman that I think I have ever seen.

In my hand I held what had probably once been a decent bonnet, but now looked like nothing better than a pie tin with the broken sticks of three feathers standing upright on it. Torn shreds of a long veil still hung from its brim, while a fierce-looking hatpin was stabbed through and through it.

Bad enough all this, of course, but oh! it was nothing to the shame and guilt I felt when a knowledge of what I had actually done broke in upon me! Minus the blood, the thing peeping at me beneath the tag of black veiling looked like nothing more than it did like the trophy of a naked savage.

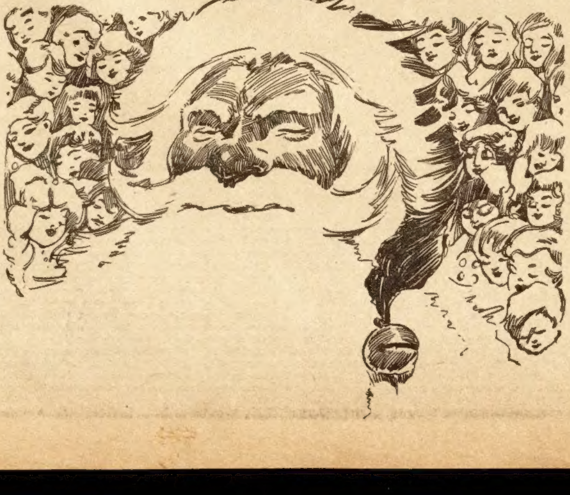
It was a complete wig of light brown hair while—how shall I say it—the hair of the woman from whose head I had snatched it was a sort of wash-worn brindle, and twisted into a hard little knot the size of a ten-cent piece on the back of her head.

So ashamed did I feel, so downright sorry, under the rage of her eyes, that I could have got down and bitten the dust at her feet, and yet not a word dared I breathe that would let on that I noticed it.

"I believe this is your bonnet ma'am," I said, jauntily, flinging it dexterously over her head, and guessing from what I had observed of such things that the stalks of the feathers were supposed to stand up behind.

By George, what luck I had anyway! The things must have been hooked on to the side of the bonnet, for when I set 'em on behind it brought the knob of hair

SANTA CLAUS' DREAM.



belonging to the switch much too far over the ear next to me.

I did one sensible thing that night, and I did it very suddenly, I turned away from the spectacle of a red-faced, angry woman, with a crop of short brown curls covering half of her forehead, while a dry bristle of sandy hair filed up the remaining spaces. This woman, as a further deformity, seemed to grow hair of enormous length over her right ear. What wonder that I faltered, trembled, and turned away!

Did you ever hear of falling in love at first sight? I have, and have poked all manner of fun at the fellows who went tumbling into a mess like that at a moment's notice.

I wasn't any kid, either, and had fooled around as much as most young men about town, with all sorts of affairs with pretty women, and yet, I will take my oath, two minutes from the time when I hung my head and turned quaking from the eye of the red-faced woman, I was as far gone as most men get under six months' fire.

And what did I see, as I turned about, to so knock the placid content of my life to atoms in a single minute? Did I see some grand dame done out in court toggeries, round neck, bare arms, flashing jewels, and other such things which, taken together with band music, dancing feet, and very good suppers, had been rousing periodical spells of sentiment in me for the last twenty years?

No, I saw nothing of the sort.

Now, for instance, just let me imagine what the brakeman saw, for he struck the sport at just about the same time as I did—a good-natured, intelligent fellow, enough, I guess, but, hang it! I bet all the dumbhead saw was a slender young girl, with her hat fallen off, lying insensible, with her head curled up on her arm as though she had just dropped asleep.

She was plainly dressed, poor little thing, and I'll bet a hundred to one that the poor fool of a brakeman never noticed the pink flush creeping back into her white cheeks, the long black lashes resting on those same cheeks, and the delicate little hands wound instinctively into the wraps she had been holding.

I felt that I would knock him down if he dared to touch her, and yet I wondered at him for a fool that he let me break in ahead of him and be the first to lift away the heavy telescope which had broken loose from somewhere and was crowding down upon her.

I must confess that I have had my arm around a woman's waist before, but—oh, confound it all! What's the use trying to explain the difference I felt, when, as timidly as a young chap asking for his first shave, I slid my arm about the slender figure of the girl and drew her up into a sitting posture.

No hauling and dragging this time, I will let you know. If she had been made of sea foam I couldn't have got hold of her more gingerly, and when, on moving her, she opened her eyes and looked around, I felt myself grow red as a girl, though blushing is an affliction I had hitherto been spared.

Still I didn't let go. There was some excuse for me, and I meant to hang on. Don't blame me. You see, the thing had come on me so suddenly, and my mind, after its wild flight, had landed so solidly on grounds where sentiments like mine might have then and there been confronted with matrimony, that I couldn't grasp that the minds of the others hadn't traveled with me.

The girl blushed, too, as her eyes met mine. Heavens! Who can tell what those foolish eyes of mine have been expressing? She drew back, too, with the prettiest, most modest little start in the world, and though I followed her up under the base pretense of arranging her wraps, I assure you I admired her more than ever for it.

"There, sir, that will do," suddenly broke out a harsh voice like a well developed thunderbolt beside me, and I was seized, not to say grabbed, by the shoulder, and jammed forcibly back from my delicious post by the car seat.

The red-faced woman, who was the fat woman, too, of course had struggled into her wig and bonnet again, but the hysterical laugh I felt rising within me at sight of her perished miserably at the sight of the menace in her eyes. Now, indeed, was I made to regret the awkward understanding existing between us, brought about by what had really been my humane impulse, which, turning into a failure in my hands, now stood as a crime against me.

It made no difference to me that the elderly party's hair was fastened on with hairpins, but it did make a great deal of difference to me that because of her scowling displeasure I could get no nearer than she liked to the fragile little creature before whom she loomed like a huge black earthwork.

I could hear the conductor bawling at the top of his voice in his excitement, as he was telling some one, probably the man in the skull cap, how the thing had happened. Our train had collided with another train, and in circusing around our car had broken loose and rolled down an embankment.

"But the deuce of it is," the conductor was shouting, as though we were all at the bottom of a well and he was at the top calling down to us, "the deuce of it is that we are just about in the middle of nowhere. We can't go on until the track is cleared. You can't stay here in any comfort. What's to be done to make you comfortable is more than I can tell."

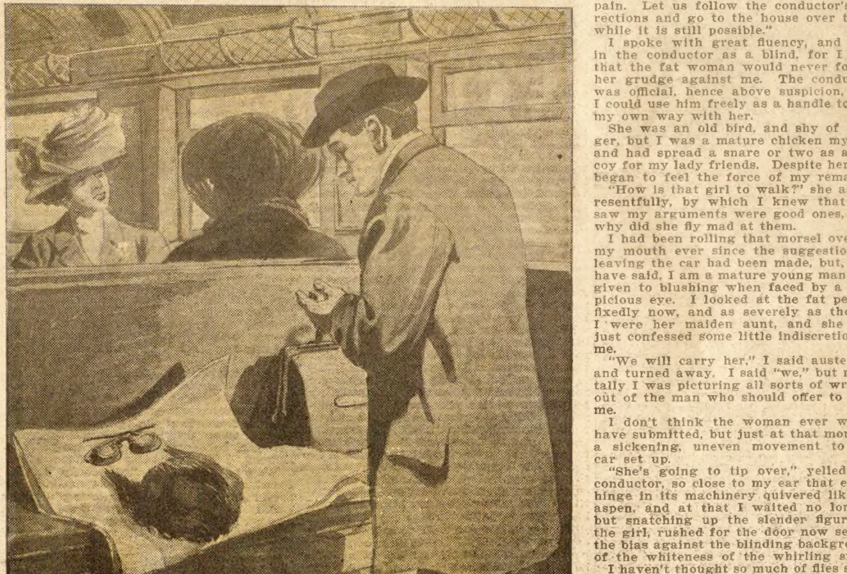
We all looked helplessly about us. It was snowing like blue blazes outside, and blowing, too. The man in the skull cap shivered like a dog, and in the midst of it all the poor little girl burst out crying. It was not to be borne quietly.

You see, my rapid imagination had already taken me through the stages of a first acquaintance. Our introduction had been done away with nicely by the railway accident. I had got, to my satisfaction, through the winning of her confidence, and was making rapid strides in my hopes of something warmer, and so what wonder when my mind had reached a pitch of hugging myself over the delight of rigging her pretty person out in such fine things as the women of my family were always wearing that her crying became a personal matter to me.

"What is it? Tell me what is the matter?" I burst out, climbing over the water-cooler and three telescopes, until I could double up on the seat before her and bring my eyes on a level with hers.

I say that I had merely forgotten that the minds of the others had not been traveling sentimental fields with mine, so it was merely an oversight on my part and no crime that I should display, in the interests of a perfect stranger, as much anxiety as though my own neck were in danger.

But the fat woman was no philosopher. She evidently didn't care a rap for my motives. It was my actions that she meant to line me up on.



Great heavens! What had I tumbled out?

"I will ask you for help if we require it, sir," she nipped out so freezingly that if I had been a bashful man she would have had me on the run, bathed in modest confusion.

Hang it! the little thing was still crying! What did I care for a cross fat woman? It was all right for her to be so fussy and formal, being a woman, and all right for me, being a man, to waive such nonsense as long as I meant well to the little creature.

"It won't trouble me in the least to help you," I said genially, thinking it best to keep a blustering good-natured air quite like a nice old gentleman. "Wouldn't you like to be lifted out of that mess?" I added coaxingly to the girl, forgetting, the instant I let my eyes rest on her, that those of the fat woman were fastened remorselessly on me.

Bless the little thing! She didn't know what to do. A sweet woman's instinct, not blunted yet by the queer ways of our social world, told her that the eyes beaming, perhaps a shade too kindly, on her meant her no harm.

She needed a strong arm just then. Mine was stretched out to her, and she was in pain, yet there stood her walking code of morals and manners frowning upon me as a pitfall, pointing me out as a trap, a mire into which she had been warned that her girlish feet must not stray.

She didn't know what to do, I say, between us two, so she put us both to shame by a fresh burst of tears.

"Oh, my ankle is twisted!" she sobbed, neither meeting my eyes nor those of her stern companion, but dropping her face like a child down upon her arms again.

I have heard of the "Seven League Boots," but they couldn't cover a patching to the space I leaped at that pathetic sight. At a pinch, I think, I could have stepped over the fat woman herself, but, as it was, the bandboxes alone were enough to have strained any man outside of a museum.

I had a feeling that the fat woman was purposely punching me with an umbrella. I didn't seem to be able to get it untangled from my legs, but that probably was merely excitement on my part. Anyway, it didn't stop me, and in shorter time than it takes to record the fantastic windings of my legs, I was over the wreck of the two car seats, and squeezed myself down on the floor beside the girl, and had gently, oh, so gently, lifted the prettiest foot I ever saw from under the car seat.

It hurt, of course, poor little atom! But just then to be strong was to be merciful, so I got the foot out, though at each wince of pain I seemed to myself like a cruel monster.

"Oh, I am so awfully sorry!" I exclaimed, abandoning myself to my feelings when the thing was done, and greedily I drank in the girl's gratitude, shining through her tears upon me.

The fat woman never could have dug me out from where I sat, and I think I should have been content to have sat there while the entire railway system had been taken up and put down again, but just then a diversion came which roused in me a hope that something might be done to relieve the torture which the poor girl's foot would be sure to give her.

The conductor had gone outside, and now he stepped in again, still under the impression that every one of us was stone deaf and that only the highest notes of his voice could reach us.

"There is a light out there across the fields," he called, whipping the snow from his hat, while he pointed with his lantern hand through one of the windows. "I remember now that a big stone house stands there. It can't be more than a step. You can stop there until we can go on again."

The fat woman and the man in the skull cap stared as coldly at him as though he had just handed them tickets to Siberia and proposed that they should use them.

"I for one can't get there," said the skull cap fellow, gloomily. "Do you expect me to go out in a night like this with nothing on but a skull cap?"

"How do you know what drifts there may be in those fields?" broke in the fat woman, accusingly. "You can't expect a lame woman to dig her way through snowdrifts surely? No, I should hardly say so!" and having answered her own question, she turned away with a smile of malice.

The conductor had meant well. He was not even distantly responsible for the drifts, of course. His pleasant excitement about the stone house had apparently fallen on barren ground, so I was not surprised, nor even shocked, to see his lips move in what I felt sure was a spell of silent cursing.

"You are perfectly welcome to sit here as long as you like," he said, with treacherous politeness, but at that I rose from the tangle in which I had been sitting and spoke mildly to him.

"I think that is a good scheme," I said, "and the sooner we get started the better. It is commencing to blow very hard, and soon the roads may be impassable."

My words had a singular effect upon the man with the skull cap. Since the accident, his face had expressed nothing but complete bewilderment, but as I announced my intention of leaving the car, such a look of cunning and suspicion did he shoot at me that I declare I felt my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth in the start it gave me.

"If you go, sir, I shall go too," he announced, with a hidden meaning in his voice, and a hidden meaning in the look he gave me which fairly chilled my blood in the sudden suspicion it gave me of him.

I had suspected him of being a little cracked before, but now it seemed he had vicious notions as well. The newspapers were always full of just such cranks, blowing off people's heads for no reason in the world but that their own upper stories needed tending to. I had no notion of being popped into the next world by the poor fool, just because he was in need of a quieting powder and a strait-jacket.

"I'll keep my eye on you, old boy," I thought, fixing him with a steady stare that set him cowering before me as though I were a mad dog. Then I turned to the two ladies, one of whom was glaring, the other looking timidly, at me.

I spoke to the fat woman and tried to keep my eye on her, but who could be answerable for the good behavior of a masculine eye, with only a fat, elderly party for a target, while all the time a pretty girl is sitting at his elbow who doesn't seem to think he means to cut her throat because he can't help looking at her.

"Madam," said I, gravely, to the fat party, "if you try to remain here you are in danger of suffering severe hardships. Besides, the young lady will be in great pain. Let us follow the conductor's directions and go to the house over there while it is still possible."

I spoke with great fluency, and cast in the conductor as a blind, for I saw that the fat woman would never forget her grudge against me. The conductor was official, hence above suspicion, and I could use him freely as a handle to get my own way with her.

She was an old bird, and shy of danger, but I was a mature chicken myself, and had spread a snare or two as a decoy for my lady friends. Despite her she began to feel the force of my remarks.

"How is that girl to walk?" she asked resentfully, by which I knew that she saw my arguments were good ones, else why did she fly mad at them.

I had been rolling that morsel over in my mouth ever since the suggestion of leaving the car had been made, but, as I have said, I am a mature young man, not given to blushing when faced by a suspicious eye. I looked at the fat person fixedly now, and as severely as though I were her maiden aunt, and she had just confessed some little indiscretion to me.

"We will carry her," I said austerely, and turned away. I said "we," but mentally I was picturing all sorts of wrecks out of the man who should offer to help me.

I don't think the woman ever would have submitted, but just at that moment a sickening, uneven movement to the car set up.

"She's going to tip over," yelled the conductor, so close to my ear that every hinge in its machinery quivered like an aspen, and at that I waited no longer, but snatching up the slender figure of the girl, rushed for the door now set on the bias against the blinding background of the whiteness of the whirling snow.

I haven't thought so much of flies since as I did before that night. What they only accomplish in scaling walls by all sorts of queer contrivances on their feet, gummy stuff, hair, and what-not, I did that night in tight shoes, with a girl in my arms, and one leg stuck through the water-cooler.

I am firmly convinced the car was upside down before I left it, and that I took my last ten paces head downward and on the ceiling of the car. Perhaps I did not, but I know that I struck the ten-foot snowdrift outside in exactly the same manner that I would had I been traveling in that way.

For a few minutes I fancied that I had been wrecked at sea and was drowning. I think every one else in the car fell out the same way, for two or three of them hit me as they passed, and for a time the snowdrift was black with snorting, struggling masses.

Being taller than any one else, I got on my feet sooner, and waded out to tolerably clear ground. All of this time I had been carrying the girl in my arms, and with all my sputtering and struggling I had been wide awake to the fact that she didn't like it.

Not that this made me feel badly at all. I expected it. She carried herself as rigid as a ramrod, but for all that she couldn't help those mental calculations of mine, and by the time that we had cleared the snowbank we were already as far as the altar, and I had decided to have Tom Hastings as my best man.

No sooner had I waded out to where the snow was about to my knees, than the little beauty, whom I had been picturing in orange blossoms, sent a slap of ice water into my face by saying coldly, "Put me down now, please; I can walk now nicely, I think."

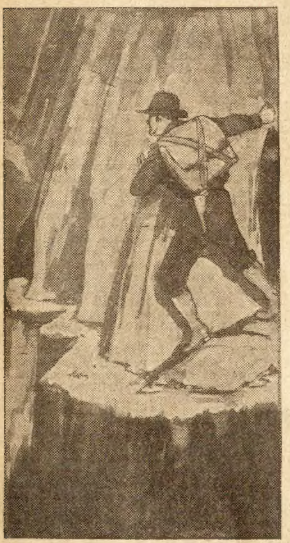
Pshaw! Why couldn't she see how it was with me? Well, of course, being a

(Continued on page fifteen.)

The Abnormal Thing

Or, THE LAST DINOSAUR

By L. JACKSON STRONG



Expecting a shot any instant.

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CHAPTER V.

A FORTUNATE FALL.

BILLFORD still sulkily refused to eat when Felton, having finished his breakfast, offered to feed him.

"Suit yourself, of course, but you'd better improve the chance to fill up, you may regret it," Felton warned.

"Look here," Billford burst out, "suppose I let you in on a good thing, better than any you're likely to pull off with Swainfurth, and his old bones. What d'ye say?"

"Bribe?" Felton asked, flatly.

"Hang you, no! It's just plain business."

"It'll wait a bit for you, I guess," Felton intimated. "I've found a snug little place to stow you away in, where you'll keep till called for, and I'll get you in it if you won't eat anything, but, as I said, you'd better."

Billford also seemed to have concluded that he'd better, for he made a hearty meal, grunting that "a man must yield, when the devil drives."

"That's sensible," Felton laughed. "I'm obliged to leave you bound—I'm driven a little myself by that same personage—and I cannot be sure whether it will be one day or three before you are released. However, a man in a perfectly quiet state, physically, cannot starve in that time. Fire away! it doesn't hurt me, and is perhaps a relief to you," he laughed, as Billford poured out a flood of curses. He resisted Felton's efforts to take him to the nook until told that if he preferred he could be left lying out in the sun, which he wouldn't find very comfortable; and again Billford changed his mind and allowed himself to be put away, wrapped in his blanket.

"There you are," Felton chuckled, "I think you'll be safe enough; there doesn't seem to be anything bigger than jack-rabbits about. Excuse the necessity," he added, with which apology he helped himself to the contents of Billford's pockets, thinking they might shed light upon his unwelcome presence, and with a cheery good-by to his prisoner, departed, heedless of the anathemas, prayers, and curses that followed him.

In his efforts to get rid of Billford the night before, Felton had little idea as to where he was going, except that he was leaving the lake behind him. Now, in the morning light, he took a keen survey of his surroundings, for not only was it necessary to have some prominent landmark by which to locate Billford, but he must learn something of his own whereabouts.

A high mountain, with a peculiar capped peak, that towered at his right, would, he thought, perhaps be visible from the lake, and serve as a certain guide to his prisoner. Crossing to it he climbed until he got sight of the lake, and observed that beyond the next and lower mountain there was a wide canyon, or valley, that trended toward the lake and would afford easy and rapid travel. A deep chasm, with perpendicular walls, footed the high mountain on his left, running along the lower mountain, also, and opening into the wide canyon beyond.

When, after several tedious detours, he reached the lower mountain Felton looked at his watch, and was dismayed to find it was past noon. With an exclamation of impatience he began the downward scramble slanting toward the wide canyon, with far greater haste than was prudent with that chasm yawning below him.

Suddenly he slipped on the pebbly soil, his feet shot out from under him, and, horrorstruck, he found himself sliding, with gathering momentum, toward the precipice, where he would probably be dashed to his death upon the rocks hundreds of feet below. As he struggled frantically to gain a hold, he recalled with a pang that two other lives would be destroyed with his; the Professor, helplessly awaiting his return, and Billford almost as helpless; and both would die of lingering starvation, cursing him as a treacherous deserter.

Desperately, and uselessly he dug his heels into the shallow soil as he glided on, the face of the incline growing steeper and barer, until there was only the slippery, pitiless rock that hastened his descent. A thousand times he anticipated the end; a thousand times he thought of Edith—he cried her name aloud as he plunged over the brink, where he hung an instant with a despairing grip to the points of rock. Then his weight tore loose the desperate clutch, and he dropped down, down—but not to the bottom of the chasm as he had expected, only to a shelf, or ledge, on the face of the cliff.

He lay for some time stunned into semi-unconsciousness; then as he slowly aroused and looked about him he felt that his doom was only delayed, and half regretted that the end had not come with his fall. The ledge was some fifteen feet wide where he had chanced to land; at his right, as he faced the chasm, it narrowed rapidly to a mere rim, and disappeared around a jutting crag; to his left it soon melted entirely away, lost in the face of the cliff. From all he could see he was as much a prisoner as the Professor or Billford, unless he could crawl on that thread of rock around the corner of the crag; and there was no certainty as to what he would find beyond it if he did. The ledge probably only extended to the outer edge of the crag; but he could not undertake to investigate it until he had recovered from the shock, and his nerves had steadied.

He found his pack still upon his shoulders, his hat lodged between a couple of large rocks. Had he struck upon them he would certainly have pitched over into the chasm. He shuddered and crept closer to the wall, realizing that, after all, he was grateful for the respite.

As he regained his composure and studied the situation, he discovered that there was a deep cleft, or opening, beneath overhanging rock in the face of the cliff, some distance to his right—perhaps a cavern running into the mountain with outlets—and escape was possible for him. His energies were alive instantly at the thought; he sprang up eager and hopeful to explore. As he entered the opening he stumbled upon a small heap of debris that could not have fallen from the rocky roof at that spot. Was it from within? If so, then man had been there, and there was a pathway out. Some yards back from the door he found plain proof of man's presence in the past—the unmistakable remains of a fire; a handful of twigs with charred ends, in a smoke-blackened, ashy hollow in the rocky floor.

The cavern swept away large and seemingly limitless in the light from the opening, and he started out cautiously; following the wall, touching it at times, watchful for sudden turnings in which he might be lost, or holes into which he might plunge. Deeper in, he noticed the walls glimmered or had a yellowish tinge that somehow reflected the uncertain light. He struck a match and held it close; then, with an incredulous cry, struck several in a bunch. The stronger light revealed that which but for its profuseness he would have said was gold. He hastily gathered a handful of the twigs, lighted them, and with his torch examined closely—the faint glimmering, the reflecting yellowish tinge, was gold! gold! He had seen enough gold ore to be sure of that. The walls, to his excited vision, seemed almost literally golden! Never had he dreamed that there existed deposits of the precious metal so rich, so free, requiring so little effort to obtain it! And how unutterably strange that he had chanced upon it in such a manner!

Further exploitation of the cavern disclosed greater riches, until he felt dizzy with the efforts to realize the colossal treasure. Man had once known of it, and visited the cavern, the remains of the fire proved that—and having once been known, if only by Indians, how had it lain hidden, undisturbed for so long that its very existence was not even dreamed of at the present time.

No gold in this barren range! He laughed aloud, recalling the contempt of the old villagers, miners and gold hunters themselves, by lifelong profession. He wandered about picking up nuggets of gold from the floor of the cavern, and fingering them curiously, with an electric thrill, as he remembered that "the treasure is to him that finds it." He, painfully accumulating little by little, hoping at some time to be able to launch a certain business of his own—he, the owner of millions! He laughed again, and shook himself, and went on with his explorations.

The roof of the cavern seemed of rough, uneven, but solid rock; it was as if the cavern itself was an enormous pocket in which the mountain genii kept their treasure—or Nature's storehouse, strong-room. The walls were uneven, with deep holes from which the gold had evidently been picked out.

To the left the roof lifted, and at the end of a great roomlike extension, there was a heap of gold-spotted debris, as if there had been, at some time, a large cave-in, with perhaps an outlet beyond. Felton climbed over it, and came upon a mass of bones that gleamed white and ghostly in the uncertain light.

"The former occupants of the cavern, and owners of the gold," Felton said to himself, looking at the grewsome objects. But he soon perceived that the bones were not human relics, but were part of a mammoth skeleton of some creature; a huge and curiously shaped skull, with eye sockets that a child might have crawled through, and gigantic, long, toothed jaws that seemed leering and grinning at him. Only the skull and a portion of the shoulders were exposed, but even his ignorance could see that it was not the skeleton of any of the known animals, and Professor Swainfurth would doubtless find it vastly more interesting than the golden walls about it.

The thought of the Professor reminded him that he was not at all sure of ever leaving his gold-bound prison. He made a complete circuit of the cavern, searching the recesses of the uneven walls, finding no other exit but the opening overlooking the chasm. If he escaped at all it must be by way of the hazardous ledge.

He contemplated it shrinkingly, yet he told himself that a swift destruction was preferable to days of lingering agony, embittered with thoughts of the fate his death entailed upon others. He suddenly felt in a fever of haste to have it over and done with. Securing his pack firmly, and buttoning his coat closely so that no swinging or flapping garments would enhance the danger, he started boldly along the ledge.

It was not difficult until he reached the point where it began to narrow rapidly. Here his courage abruptly left him, and he could not force himself to venture further. Again and again he made the attempt, but his nerves were not equal to it. At the end, where the rim swerved around the crag, it was, seemingly, lost in other crags; perhaps it extended no farther. The deepening shadows rendered it impossible for him to judge; and at last he wisely decided to remain in the cavern until the light of morning enabled him to see what lay before him.

He had recovered from the shock of the fall, next morning, and was himself again. Still he felt he could not walk that narrow path hanging over the chasm, so, taking to hands and knees, he slowly and carefully crawled inch by inch, resolutely keeping his eyes from the depths below. Slowly, carefully, he twisted himself around, between the crags, among bowlders; then he shouted in incredulous surprise. He was upon the slope for which he was making when he fell. He leaped up and dashed down it hurrahing wildly, in exquisite relief. A thought brought him to a halt. Could he find the ledge that led to the golden cavern?

He scanned the slope behind him, and would have sworn that no such ledge existed as that from which he had just escaped. Broken crags jutted out in too many places, to serve as a guide. They hid all traces of the cavern. It was not discernible from any point that he could distinguish.

He went back, and after much search located the spot where he had crawled out between the crags and bowlders, and discovered the barely discernible ledge. To make sure, he crawled partly around the crag; the widening ledge and the mouth of the cavern were before him.

The knowledge of the safe termination of the dangerous pathway deprived it of most of its terror, and he was half minded to go back for another view of the riches within the cavern, but decided he had not time to waste, miserlike, contemplating his wealth. The higher capped peak would guide him to the vicinity, but the spot must be definitely marked, else once away from it he might never find it again.

A stunted pine stood a short distance up the slope, duplicated in a thousand similar places, but he might use it as a sort of flag staff. The linings of his coat sleeves were a dark red, these he tore out, and with the remainder of the Professor's rope he tied them in long strips to the top of the pine. The bright color of the fluttering strips would catch the eye from far down the canyon.

The capped peak, was as he had hoped, visible from the lake at intervals between the lesser mountains, and relieved of all anxiety concerning the finding of Billford and the cavern, he hurried on with some fear as to how it had fared with Professor Swainfurth. This fear was speedily dissipated, when, on nearing the place, he heard the conversational duet going on with apparently undiminished vigor and relish.

He lay down in a sheltered spot to wait until the beast had departed to its lofty lair.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DOSE ADMINISTERED.

"Oh, here you are," Swainfurth greeted him shortly, when he appeared. "I ordered you not to fire. I supposed that you had been killed in the fracas you created, perhaps devoured."

His manner indicated that such fate would only have been Felton's just deserts, and he seemed not to have considered his own condition in that case.

"Your bullet nicked one side of the creature's snout," he went on with growing indignation. "I explained to you that I particularly desired a perfect specimen, mounted, if I could not keep the wondrous beast alive."

This absurd bickering, after what he had gone through, somewhat provoked Felton, and he delivered the package in silence.

"The rope!" demanded the Professor, after a hasty examination.

"There's all I have," Felton said, shortly. He could not, and would not attempt an explanation that would have to be forced upon Swainfurth's attention. He had no idea what the rope had been intended for—a hundred such could not hold that huge creature.

Swainfurth grumbled a little more as he looked at the few articles, but cleared up somewhat over his "quieters," which were carefully packed in a small paper box, and that embedded in cotton and placed inside another paper box, which was securely tied. Felton wondered at the care with which they had been put up; it suggested danger. Was the preparation an explosive? That seemed unlikely, as the Professor had distinctly said its effect was stupefying.

Recovering his ordinary manner, Swainfurth explained that, as all animals are very sensitive about the nostrils, he had meant, while the beast was under the effect of his "quieters," to puncture the division in the snout and run the doubled rope, or cord, through it, as vicious bulls are ringed, hoping to be able in time to capture it so, and keep it alive.

Felton considered that an impossibility, but it was not for him to scout the Professor's notions, the rope had done him good service. He sprawled on the sand in the sun, while Swainfurth, without a word of complaint at his long and uncomfortable imprisonment, expatiated afresh upon the unparalleled privileges he had enjoyed in the undisturbed observation and study of this lone specimen of prehistoric times.

"There are learned men, highly exalted by the world, who would willingly give a limb to have had my experience," he assured Felton. "To say nothing of all that is yet to come, in the possession of the creature."

As he listened, Felton's temporary vexation gave place to admiration and respect for a man who could maintain such exuberant enthusiasm under such exceedingly trying circumstances.

Swainfurth asked no questions concerning Edith, and manifested no interest in matters at the village, or Felton's journey thither and back, although he might be supposed to have had some curiosity as to why Felton had been a night longer on the way than they had reckoned on. He busied himself getting his dose in readiness, but looked up to say pleasantly:

"Felton, you had perhaps better see if your hiding-place is still available; he raged around considerably after you so heedlessly injured and disturbed him. He will be back presently; I think he has grown more restless and also more intelligent. I have been accustoming him to taking food flung to him, that I may be able to administer the capsules, from the effect of which I hope eventually to capture him, although it will be necessary for me to return to the village, and blend, in my small retort which I have with me, the various ingredients that compose the capsules, and prepare more of them. These are all I have compounded, and I have never tested them, but I am certain as to the effect."

Felton had not waited for this long explanation to be finished before examining his place of concealment. He found the heap of bowlders almost entirely demolished, as if flung aside in a furious game of ball, and shuddered at the evidence of the creature's immense strength and the possibility of the Professor's untested dose stimulating it to further fury instead of sending it into a quiet stupor.

The best he could do at concealing himself was to squeeze flat between two large bowlders. He was not hidden, but the beast, from its very size, could not get at him without pulling aside the bowlders, and its attention would be given to the Professor.

The journey and its incidents had somewhat blurred the picture of the beast in his mind, and he thrilled with new horror, disgust, and apprehension as it appeared upon the top of the low mountain across the little bay. Better leave it to its own life than to precipitate a fearful disaster resulting in the destruction of both of them; but for the uselessness of it he would have proposed this to the Professor. He admitted to himself that he feared the horrible Thing outlined so hideously above them.

No such thought disturbed Swainfurth, who shouted with the pride of ownership: "Observe him closely Felton! It appears that he is going to display a peculiar accomplishment of his—the most gigantic coasting in the world, I'll wager."

The monster stood peering down, its horrible head in a listening attitude, as Swainfurth called again and again, excitedly, "Observe him closely Felton! It is wonderful! wonderful!"

It was an astonishing spectacle. The beast planted its stodgy front legs wide apart, its back knees doubled under it, and with wings half extended, suddenly slid down the steep face of the mountain, and dropped upon the sand. The descent was accompanied by a nerve-rasping, croaking sound, significant, perhaps, of the creatures enjoyment of this amusement.

Ages of the pastime had worn many shining, polished streaks upon the rocky wall, which Felton had noticed, but had not dreamed owed their existence to such a cause.

"I really think he begins to recognize my voice with something like pleasure," Swainfurth cried. "Don't speak, Felton," he interjected, a wholly unnecessary warning. "He is becoming accustomed to me. I may possibly awaken a good deal of intelligence if I succeed in capturing him and keeping him alive, as I hope and expect to do. Oh, the world itself will ring with my achievement, and will stand astonished before him! I shall be envied by all scientific students. I shall have that in my possession which crowned monarchs could not purchase with their kingdoms. Having once been under the influence of my peculiar preparation, he will thereafter be more docile and more susceptible to its influence, and his capture will be only a matter of caging him. The first effect is the crucial test, but there can be no question but that it will be salutary."

The creature did have the air of listening to the Professor's voice as if recognizing an accustomed and pleasant sound. It waddled about on the hither side of the bay, then splashed through the shallow water, and extended its huge carcass on the ground in front of Swainfurth with an expectant look of intelligence it had not displayed before. It really seemed capable of learning, and did not appear to be naturally ill-tempered or destructive. Noting these things, Felton admitted that Swainfurth's hopes and plans as the champion showman of the world, were not without reason.

If the Thing could be captured and kept alive it would be the wonder of the world. There would be great difficulties to overcome, but money will do almost anything and there would now be plenty of that. He thought with exultation of his golden cavern, his and Swainfurth's—on conditions—there would be millions—and with Edith. The future took on a rosy glow, and he looked with kindlier, less critical eyes upon the hideous, lumpy creature that had been the cause of his journey into the wilderness that led to the discovery of the cavern.

From time to time the Professor tossed out halves of the fresh biscuit Felton had brought, and the creature licked them into his cavernous mouth with a piggish whoof and snuffle of satisfaction.

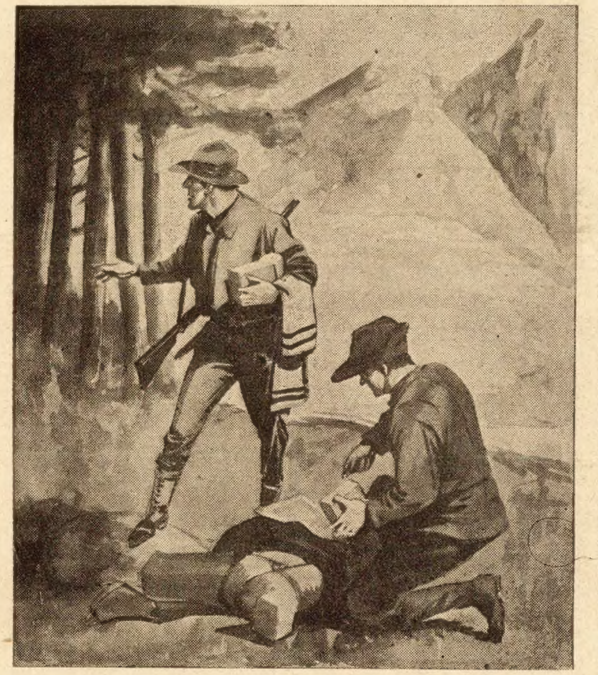
"I began immediately teaching him to eat with the food you left. He has learned to pick it up remarkably quick, though I suppose he would pick either of us up as quickly," Swainfurth laughed. "I was relieved of all anxiety as to the administering of the capsules, when he so readily took what I gave him. He will pick up everything I offer him now, and I think you will presently have abundant time to liberate me, and we can endeavor to find a way of controlling him while he is under the influence of the dose. Also, I shall have the opportunity and privilege of examining him closely and at my leisure. He had taken the dose from the box and placed the capsules in a thin, stout paper, which would soon melt in the creature's stomach and free them. He poised the small package, and with a fervent "The moment has come! The fates be propitious!" he tossed it as he had the biscuit, and it was as quickly licked up.

The beast still crouched expectantly, and after a few moments Swainfurth tossed another piece of biscuit, remarking that it deserved a reward for taking its medicine. This lay untouched, and the creature soon began to manifest signs of uneasiness. It shuffled and twisted about, at times scraping its stomach heavily on the gravelly sand; breathing in short, stertorous puffs.

"It should take effect in a very short time, but it is not possible that it should be painful. The one ingredient perfectly ——" The Professor's soliloquy died out in an anxious silence, as he regarded the creature with startled uncertainty; a silence broken presently by whimpering moans, as the great beast rose to its feet and turned round and round, in a bewildered manner. Then it began swinging its snout from side to side, striking the sides of its body viciously.

"Colic, bad," Felton muttered, grinning at the astonished alarm that chased the former complacency from the Professor's face.

"I was surely not mistaken in the nature of my preparation! It should have a soothing, quieting effect; that combination cannot result otherwise." Swainfurth exclaimed in broken sentences.



"They might attack us on the ledge."

"Surely! surely it is all right! Great heaven!" he shrieked.

"I guess it's taken effect, all right, all right!" Felton said, shrinking out of sight as far as possible.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DISASTROUS RESULT.

The monster suddenly bounded up and down, its wings flapping furiously, raising a storm of sand and dust. It tore along the beach with bellows that fairly shook the earth. It dashed into the water, rolled over and over, leaped and plunged, churning the little bay to foam, and sending up showers of spray, all the while voicing its agony in guttural moans, roars, and bellows.

At length it rushed out on the other side (Felton breathed a thanksgiving), gyrated around with a velocity as marvelous as it was startling in a creature of such great bulk, and extended its wings, which were beginning to drag, and tried to rise in the air and seek its lofty home. The effort was vain, and it stood panting an instant with gaping, drooling jaws, then burst into more frantic contortions, emitting a horrible volume of awful sounds that made Felton's hair rise.

"Incredible! incredible!" Swainfurth shrieked again and again. "It is impossible that I was mistaken! Oh, incredible that I have injured that wondrous creature! Why, I tell you," he raged to Felton, "I tell you its effect is quiescent! It is not possible that I was mistaken! Oh, incredible!" His eyes glared wildly at the great, leaping mass opposite.

"Be quiet!" Felton commanded authoritatively. "That furious cyclone would instantly annihilate us if it happened to notice us."

The creature's agonized convulsions were now terrible to witness, its great membraneous wings were only a tangled mass about its feet and writhing body.

"Oh, if it were only possible to put it out of its misery," Felton muttered helplessly, wishing the end would come in some way.

It did, and in an appalling manner. The creature suddenly leaped to the cliff, and repeatedly hurled its body against the solid wall of rock. There came a terrific, tearing, rending explosion; sand flew as from a blast; there was a great burst of glowing flame; and a black, fetid smoke that soon enveloped everything upon that side and spread out over the water—and there fell a silence but for the echoes still ringing from lofty crag to crag, the dying voice of the already dead, annihilated creature.

The prehistoric monster, which had survived for untold ages, had been literally wiped out of existence by the mighty force hidden in the small capsules concocted by an insignificant human being. Never had man's supremacy over all else in Nature a greater illustration.

Felton could not, at once, believe the astounding fact; his amazed eyes searched the beach, the crags, the snowy peaks, for that dark, moving form. Nothing remained but small, smoking spots here and there, the last disappearing fragments of that immense creature which had been so terribly alive a short while before.

Swainfurth was raving wildly and incoherently, cursing and tearing his sparse locks, vowing to make a like end of himself as soon as he had prepared more of the capsules. He would come here and expiate his crime upon the very spot where it had been committed. Felton went to him with attempts at consolation, to which he did not listen.

His wild, raving paroxysm having spent itself, he seemed as if just awakening, and said to Felton, piteously:

"Felton, I seem to have fallen into a horrible nightmare! I imagine I have seen the utterly impossible—the destruction of that wondrous creature! It cannot be, of course. He has gone to his lair—only my mind is blurred, and I cannot realize it. Bring water, will you, and dash on my head. I cannot, cannot be awake!" His voice shook and trailed away into a whimper.

Felton regarded him with alarm. Had the shocking catastrophe unsettled that great intellect? He sopped his handkerchief and bathed the Professor's hot head and working face, saying as naturally as possible, hoping to recall the confused man to himself:

"The first thing is to get you out of this. It's small wonder that your endurance has failed, after so long a siege."

"But is it true? Tell me! True, and no delusion, no evil nightmare—true that the awful thing really happened? The total destruction of the most stupendous object the earth contained? And by my hand! By my sacrilegious hand!" He beat his fists wildly upon the rocks.

Felton let him rave, and set about getting him out. He found that a couple of large bowlders met above the Professor's limb, forming an aperture too small to allow his foot to pass through. There was nothing to pry with, but by digging away the sand from the outside one he caused it to settle over, and thus liberate Swainfurth. The limb was only slightly bruised, but he was so stiff and lame he could not stand when he was at last free. Felton carried him to the water's edge, bared his feet and immersed them in the cooling pool, and rubbed the bruised ankles. Then he soaked biscuit in brandy and made him eat.

"You've nearly starved yourself," he declared. "There isn't anything else the matter with you, Swainfurth. Now, you eat."

"How can I survive the calamity! The greatest that ever befell the earth!" the Professor mumbled dully, seeming finally to have accepted the bitter truth. Then he turned vindictively to Felton. "I hold you responsible, in great part, Felton; it is another score against you."

"In Heaven's name, what had I to do with it, or with your actions?" Felton demanded indignantly. "You are unreasonable and ungrateful, Swainfurth! I came to seek you, and I have only followed out your own directions in the list——"

"You—you might have cautioned me," the Professor broke in. "You might have restrained me. You need not have brought all that I had, anyhow—or you could have——"

"It was not my business to pry into your affairs, and undo the package of capsules which you had expressly said was not to be meddled with, that I was to bring it just as it was. I can take oath that I followed your directions carefully. I can prove by Miss Edith that I checked article by article from your list as I took it out, and had nothing to do with any other. You are utterly childish in your accusation, Swainfurth. I can only suppose that you are still——"

"Miss Edith!" Swainfurth ejaculated, his eyes gleaming maliciously. "Do you imagine that I do not understand your pretended interest in me? But let me tell you, sir, it is useless! I am a man of my word! I once distinctly refused to accept you as my son-in-law. I do yet! Nothing can change that decision! Understand it is for all time!" He had risen and was limping about painfully, gesticulating fiercely. He was evidently fast recovering his normal condition, so tough and hardy had his apparently puny frame become through his active outdoor life.

Determined not to quarrel with him, or argue vainly, Felton remained silent. He could make allowance for the irritability arising from such an acute blow as Swainfurth had just suffered, but he had hoped that the Professor's groundless prejudice against himself had been dissipated by their late experiences and association, and he was disappointed and disgusted at this evidence of still existing narrow injustice.

The matter of Billford's presence, which probably concerned Swainfurth, demanded immediate attention, and the discovery of the golden cavern, with the mammoth skeleton, second only to the discovery of the living monster, should also be acted upon at once; but Felton decided to keep these things to himself, and not take into his confidence one so biased and hostile. Swainfurth could not live forever, and though she would not desert her father, Edith had promised to be his and no other's, and she was true as steel.

And what a mighty retribution he could heap upon Swainfurth if he chose, by turning over to his scientific rivals the skeleton in the cavern. After a brief rest he would go on and leave Swainfurth to his own time and way.

The Professor was minutely examining the ground where the ghastly tragedy had occurred, hoping to find tangible evidence, in some fragment of its body, that the monster had really been a living existence, at the time of its discovery, but every scrap had literally melted away. He had waded, still barefooted, across the shallower part of the bay, and was going over and over the spot, groaning lugubriously, and occasionally beating his head with his fist.

Suddenly he straightened, alert with an exciting thought, and hurried back to Felton.

"Look here, Felton! I've been strangely dull not to have thought of it immediately. I must have your sacred promise—your word of honor as a man—to swear, before a notary, to a paper I shall myself prepare, describing this wonderful prehistoric creature as it was—alive—alive! although unknown ages old—alive when I discovered it! Also, that you will yourself write out a full account of all you saw and experienced concerning it. 'In the mouth of two witnesses it shall be established!'"

"Hadn't you better wet your head again, and sit down, Professor? You seem a little off yet," Felton said, mildly.

"Off!" the Professor shouted. "Are you insinuating that my mind is not clear?"

"You seem somewhat bothered yet with hallucinations," Felton replied, lolling carelessly on his back. "Not that it's much wonder. Any man, imprisoned as long as you have been in this God-forsaken hole, with death by starvation staring him in the face, would be in a condition to see prehistoric monsters, devils, or any other old thing his fevered imagination conjured up."

"Fevered imagination!" Swainfurth shrieked, his eyes bulging in astonishment. "Why you—you yourself saw it repeatedly—watched it coming and going—flying to yonder lofty peak—crouching on the sand—and here! here!" he stamped violently, "here is still the print of its gigantic foot! You had to fly from its fury—you shamelessly fired upon it—a creature millions of years old! You hid from it! You saw it countless times—you are as familiar with the fact of its living presence here as I am. You are aware of all its peculiar personal characteristics—they must be as vivid in your mind as in mine! Listen, and deny if you can!"

The Professor vehemently and graphically portrayed the remarkable appearance of the creature he had so unwittingly destroyed; and when he finished and glared triumphantly at Felton for confirmation, that rascal merely pulled his hat lower and remarked in a bored tone:

"Sounds uncommonly like Dante's Inferno. You must've had some pretty sulphurous nightmares in your prison."

Swainfurth seized and shook him passionately, then released him of a sudden, admitting unexpectedly: "I am acting the part of a crazy loon."

He stood regarding Felton in silence for a time, with the air of one studying out the intricacies of a puzzle, and finally his countenance relaxed in a grim smile, and he said:

"All right, young man, suppose it is as my son-in-law that I ask you to make the signed and sworn to statement?"

Felton sprang up and gathered the little man in his arms: "Now you're shouting! We will astonish the world, Papa Swainfurth! Give me your word that Edith and I shall be married as soon as things are settled, and I'm yours to command."

Swainfurth winced, but did the thing handsomely.

"I don't know as I have anything in particular against you, but I'm naturally obstinate, and in an irritable moment I had said that you shouldn't marry Edith. I meant to stick to it. Now I unsay it—the first time, I think, that I ever broke my word. I shall not break it again. Here's my hand, and I promise that you and Edith shall be married as soon as you please, when this affair is settled." They shook hands gravely.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME CONSOLATION.

"I beg your pardon, Professor, for the trick, but it seemed the only way to bring you to reasonable terms," Felton laughed. "And now I will show you something better than our mere statements. I am an illustrator, as well as reporter, which you perhaps did not know, and as I lay in my hole the other day, I made drawings of that unnamable Thing upon my cuffs, not having anything else at hand. Their genuineness will hardly be questioned; no man could possibly imagine such a creature." He pulled out his cuffs.

Swainfurth snatched them in eager surprise; perfect in detail, and in several attitudes, the hideous monster was before him. No necessity now for the laborious and imperfect reconstruction from memory. Tears filled his eyes as he contemplated it.

"To think that I, myself, destroyed that marvelous creature! Felton if I were mobbed for the vandalism it is only what I deserve. I confess that I was too hasty, too careless, in using anything whatever upon an organism of which I knew nothing at all. I believe now that the creature's bodily substance must have differed materially, from what we know as flesh and blood. I am positive that upon no living creature with which I am acquainted would those capsules have had such a destructive effect."

"To me the monster did not look like ordinary flesh and blood. How could it be such, and millions of years old? Its destruction is truly a calamity, but cannot be remedied, and you can place before the world indisputable evidence of your discovery of the venerable gentleman alive. And now, Professor Swainfurth, I hope you'll give me your attention while I tell you of what I consider some very important discoveries on my part, as well as some other matters that we must see to at once."

Hastily and concisely he related all that had occurred, the Professor listening with a growing excitement that overflowed at the description of the cavern and skeleton.

"Felton, this is beyond words astonishing!" he cried, hopping up and tramping about. "A golden cavern is one of the features of the legend preserved by the Indians here. Long ago their remote ancestors discovered it, and for generations repaired to it for gold. Its exact location was always kept a secret from all but one, the tribal representative, as we might say, holding a sacred office. He alone visited it, and he handed the secret down to his successor. But at last, so goes the legend, a demon, devil, or evil spirit appeared in the cavern suddenly, in great anger at the pilfering of the treasure, and no one has dared visit the cavern since. Certain landmarks by which it can be located have always been religiously preserved, but no one in the memory of the living has ever undertaken to find the cavern because of the evil spirit whose menacing vengeance filled these mountains with roaring threats. This is what I elicited from an aged Indian recluse, who, I presume, is the keeper of the secret of the location of the cavern. He lives across the lake with the remnants of his tribe, but out of range of the influence of the evil spirit. He has never ventured near the shore of this region; but said that once, when youth was strong within him, he had stolen in his canoe close to the outward side of the island, and heard the awful voice of the spirit; and, he assured me, it still roared in his ears. I paid little attention to the treasure cavern—there is almost invariably treasure, fabulous treasure in every old legend—but what he told me deepened the conviction that a strange living creature really existed. As to the spirit that appeared in the cavern, it is plain enough. The ignorant are always superstitious, and see spirits in all Nature's phenomena—and the skeleton, suddenly disclosed by the caving wall——"

"And so hideous!" Felton interjected.

"Became at once the wrathful, vindictive spirit that has ever since held the cavern undisturbed. I am puzzled though as to why the living monster did not frighten them from the region long before, as it must have been here for ages."

"The cavern is some distance from here, and the voice of the creature, prodigious though it was, did not perhaps penetrate so far into the interior. It always, probably, required a great quantity of water, and kept near the lake. The approach to the cavern is easier and more direct, the way Billford and I came, than it is from the lake, and the long-ago medicine man very likely took that route when he visited his bank," Felton said.

"Yes, undoubtedly the monster required a great deal of water for its comfort. It disported itself often in the lake, was probably amphibious to a large degree. I presume the various sounds have been heard always. If I had thought to question concerning that point I would have learned of them. At any rate, something has kept this region uninhabited. Felton!" he exclaimed, at a sudden thought, "it is possible that the skeleton is that of another creature such as was the living one—may possibly have been his mate, and together they dwelt in this range, their lair in a mighty cavern in yon snow-crowned peak, until, in some tremendous convulsion of Nature one was overwhelmed, to reappear as a skeleton, the evil spirit of the cavern formed perhaps by the same convulsion. And we may imagine that some faint memory of that mate held the living monster to this region all the ages since."

The Professor, it appeared, had a romantic vein in his make-up. He gazed at the distant peak, murmuring: "Our eyes have seen it! our eyes have seen it! And it is not beyond the possible that the skeleton is—proves indeed to be—Come, let us speed to the cavern!" He started on the instant.

But Felton insisted that they must have a "feed" before they set out. By this time their differences had all been forgotten, and the Professor was himself again eager, alert, and friendly. Before departing, Felton made sketches of the place, and the gigantic footprints which would soon disappear forever; while the Professor made exact measurements of them, relapsing into dolorous lamentations as he did so.

"I played it pretty rough on Billford," Felton remarked, as they jogged along, "but I felt justified in using extreme measures to prevent his following me."

"You did perfectly right," Swainfurth declared. "His presence would have been unbearable. He is meanly revenging himself in prying and spying, to annoy me."

"From his hints I think his object is of much greater importance than merely annoying you. I was so convinced of this, that I took possession of the letters and papers in his pockets, so that, if you thought it necessary for your self-protection, you might perhaps discover what he is up to by examining them. I have not looked at them. I leave it to you to say whether we shall go through them or not."

Professor Swainfurth reflected a few moments. "Unless some one wiser than he is behind this it is purely personal spite. He knows little and cares less about scientific matters. Still it can do no harm; we will examine the papers."

They were deep into the mountains, having traveled with the unconscious rapidity of preoccupied impatience, and a rest of some minutes was not unwelcome. There were several ordinary letters, which needed but a glance to show they were of no importance, a few bills, and a page of detached memoranda in an unaddressed envelope. This the Professor studied closely, then handed to Felton remarking:

"This looks like indefinite directions as to the location of some object, or point, and it certainly does not appear to fit the spot where I discovered the prehistoric monster."

Felton glanced over the paper, muttering aloud the detached sentences, mostly mere fragments, and bounded up with a startled cry.

"What's this? 'G. C. region—capped peak?' It must be—it is a reference to the Golden Cavern—and located, too, in the region of the capped peak. By George! Billford was on to it, after all—and I've got him balked almost. Say!" he bawled to the gaping Professor, "is it the gold or the bones he's after?"

"The skeleton, without dobut!" Swainfurth yelled. "He's been to VanStettor with——"

"And see here," Felton interrupted. "This means he's to consult some one—somebody who knows—some one out here! Perhaps even this minute others are— Come on!" He plunged away up the canyon, leaping small obstructions, swerving around large ones, with Swainfurth like a hound at his heels. The little man seemed put together with steel springs, for endurance and activity. Both thought only of the fact that others had learned the location of the cavern, and both were burning with impatience to reach it before those 'others;' the Professor on account of the mammoth skeleton, which he felt persuaded was something new, and Felton solely for the gold.

"We can't keep up this pace," Felton panted at last. "We'd better use reason, if we've got any, and cool down before one of us gets a tumble that'll end the whole business for us."

They dropped to a trot which, in spite of his homily on sense, Felton led on with, for a couple of hours or so, keenly noting the turnings of the canyon, that he did not leave the route.

"Whoop! here she is!" he pointed to the capped peak, the lower mountain at the head of the canyon, with the precipice cutting one side of the long, steep, bowlder-strewn slope. As they climbed, Felton trended toward the half-concealed chasm, watching for a sight of his red signal, growing somewhat puzzled as he found, by facing about and sighting the capped peak over his left shoulder, that they should be nearing the spot.

"It cannot be far off," he said. "But where is my mark?"

"I am afraid it was very unwise of you Felton, to stick up a conspicuous, flaunting thing like that, which would attract immediate attention."

"Maybe," Felton admitted. "Still it is hardly possible that any one would come here, unless it was Billford, and I have him safe. Perhaps we are not far enough up yet, to see it."

A few moments later he exclaimed, in dismay: "Yonder is the pine, and it has been broken off!"

"Yes, yonder's your pine, the top twisted and splintered and your red rag gone! It is as I feared, your dullness has betrayed us."

It was beyond denial; somebody had torn down the signal and broken the top of the pine. He wondered if any wild animal, excited by the color, would attack and destroy it. If not, then some one had been there. Had he found the ledge leading to the cavern?

"Professor Swainfurth," he said, with renewed hope. "Let me see you find the ledge. We'll prove if it is easily discoverable."

The Professor caught at the idea eagerly, and whisked about the crags and among the bowlders along the precipice like a great grasshopper.

"Give it up?" Felton demanded, as at last he sat down mopping his wet forehead.

"If the person who did that," motioning to the pine, "was not certain of the location of the ledge and cavern, he has, perhaps, missed the skeleton, after all." Swainfurth returned. "Can you find it?"

Felton nodded. "I took several precautions; and without something of the sort, or a map of the spot, I don't believe any one could discover the ledge. The person who tore down my flag may have missed it, and be lurking about, watching to see us go to the cavern. We'll have to chance it. If they have found the way, they may be in the cavern, and will give us a hot reception, or—" he looked dubious—"they may attack us on the ledge, and send us into the chasm. We'll have to chance that, too."

"Of course," Swainfurth assented.

"But if they have got possession, and let me off alive, I'll contest it, for it is 'claim jumping.' I staked it the best I could in the situation. Now I'll soon show you the ledge."

He went up to the pine tree, and descended obliquely, counting the paces, to the crags, dropped down, crawled around between crags and bowlders, and leaned forward, peering out cautiously for some moments.

"It seems all right," he said, drawing back and speaking to the Professor who was just behind him. "I suppose we can't tell whether anybody is in there till we get to the cavern, unless they pounce out on us, and then it'll be too late. You'd better let me go first, and if nothing happens to me, you come——"

"Do I look like that!" Swainfurth snorted.

"Of course not, but we needn't both——"

"Go on!"

"All right, then! Use the utmost caution, Professor. It is very narrow at the start."

"Lead on!"

Felton crawled along carefully and rapidly, watching the mouth of the cavern, half expecting a shot at any instant. He sprang up at the wider part, and slipping to the corner of the cavern door, fired a shot across it. Nothing but the echoes answered, and darting inside he waited against the darker wall listening, but the stillness was unbroken until Swainfurth dashed in.

Satisfied that the cavern had not been entered, Felton pointed out his "stakes." As far as he could reach, to right and left of the mouth of the cavern with the precarious footing, he had, with his drawing pencil, posted a "To whom it may concern" notice that this was his claim, etc., declaring his intention of entering it for mining purposes immediately, with his name and date; having a hazy idea that it would constitute a legal claim, until he could fulfill the requirements of the law. Swainfurth did not listen, but plunged into the cavern, demanding the skeleton.

Felton lighted one of the small torches they had brought and flourished it about.

"But look at these walls, Professor! Was there ever such a——"

"Where is it? Quick! Where is it?" Swainfurth fumed. "Show it to me! The skeleton! the skeleton!"

"Why man! haven't you eyes for this wonderful sight? Almost inexhaustible riches!"

"If what I hope, nay believe! is true, your gold is as nothing!"

"Well then, here it is—the evil spirit, demond, great bugaboo that for ages has guarded this fabulous treasure."

Felton led the way down to the mound of fallen debris and pointed beyond. Swainfurth flung himself over, and squatting down beside the startling object, began a hurried examination.

"Hold the light closer! It is—no it is not." He muttered a long list of seeming points, comparing them to the exposed parts of the skeleton, which he touched with trembling, reverent hands.

This strange story leads to very extraordinary situations and dramatic episodes. The reader will find it eminently worth reading to the end. Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of it. The surest way to get the Ledger is to subscribe for it and have it come to your home regularly. Today is a good time to attend to this.

* * *

Excellent Scheme.

An enormous sign on the outside of the shop declared that never before in the history of man had there been such a reduction in the price of men's clothing. In the window, rows of garments were marked with prices that made the observer wonder how such bargains were possible. A young woman examined them thoughtfully through the plate glass, hesitated a moment, and then entered the shop.

"I should like to see some lounging jackets," she explained to the salesman.

"We have some magnificent bargains in lounging jackets, madam," admitted the salesman. He waved her proudly to a pile on the counter.

"The styles don't change much, do they?" asked the young woman.

"Not a bit. The same styles will be worn next season."

"You see," said the young woman, "I'm just looking around for a present for my husband."

"You could hardly give him a better present," said the salesman, sympathetically.

"But I don't know his size," sighed the young woman. "And I think it's just awful to have to exchange a present."

"Very unpleasant," agreed the salesman. "But with a little domestic strategy— Now if I were in your place, madam, I'd tell him he is getting fat."

"But he isn't getting fat?" The customer was getting quite indignant. "He may be a little heavier than he was a year ago—but not fat."

"Of course not," the salesman said, hastily. "But if you ask him if he isn't getting fat he'll deny it. See?"

"Of course he'll deny it."

"Well, you persist, and he still denies. Finally you ask him how large he actually is around the chest."

The young woman nodded.

"And he'll tell me his bust measure!" she exclaimed delightedly.

"Exactly! And then, just to make sure, you'll insist on measuring him yourself. Shall I put this coat aside for you in three sizes until tomorrow?"

"If you will be so good," said the young woman. "I think the color of that coat just matches one of his neckties—but when I come tomorrow I'll bring the necktie with me."

* * *

AN EARLY HINT.

Oh, Santa Claus, when you prepare
  To note the needs of man,
Allot me but a little share
  In all your generous plan.
To benefactions great and free
  My wish will not aspire,
If you will but deliver me
  From things I don't desire.

Your excellent cigars I've puffed;
  I've worn your neckties fine;
At reading poems I have bluffed
  With yawns in every line.
So be no prodigal who flings
  His thoughtless gifts about,
But just relieve me of the things
  I'd rather be without.

* * *

Figuratively Only.

Country Storekeeper—"I'm afeard that new assistant won't do, Mandy. He seems a weak-kneed sort of chap."

Mandy—"Weak-kneed! Why, I ketched him yesterday with that fat Simpson gal on his lap."

SANTA CLAUS BINKY

By John E. Nordquist

BINKY sat in his cell in deep, disconsolate study. The babelous discord of his fellow prisoners disturbed him not at all. The shame of occupying a jail-cell did not worry Binky. To the contrary; it was the knowledge that his sentence expired a day too soon, that imbittered his spirit. As to the cause of Binky's downfall, the slang term "booze" is sufficient explanation.

"It's curious how the judge always hands me an even thirty days fer bein' tanked," grumbled Binky. "Why can't he make it thirty-one? If he'd done so this trip, that 'u'd let me in on th' Christmas dinner. As 'tis, I'll be turned loose Christmas Eve without a bean to git th' wife an' kids a Christmas feed. I sure wish th' judge 'u'd been more uv an oddfellow, an' handed me thirty-one."

Time in the county jail passed quickly for Binky. Considerable liberty was granted those under light sentence. Gambling was their chief pastime; the shuffling of cards an ever-present sound. Here many a youngster, incarcerated for some minor offense against society, gains his first gambling lesson. Having nothing else of value, they must perforce risk the clothes on their backs, or their prison meals.

The only grievance Binky and his pals laid up against their jailer was the poor quality of board. Partially consoling, therefore, were thoughts of the coming Christmas dinner. This important function, usually a joint affair of the sheriff and Salvation Army, was truly something to pine for, since an unchangeable ration of bread and soup palls on one.

Impatient mouths watered with turkey and cranberry chatter, while Binky could but grit his teeth; these festive morsels were not for him. In line with his usual run of luck, his sentence expired the day before the dinner. Gloomy and morose grew Binky as the great event drew near. His prison chums avoided him. Unable to bear their optimistic views, he became a lone pessimist in a company of twenty prisoners.

The day preceding Christmas Eve a solution to the all-important puzzle appeared, and at once his demeanor changed. Again he became the carefree individual his acquaintances were wont to call "Happy Bink."

"I'll eat Christmas dinner with yuh, don't yuh fear, fellers!"

"How're yuh goin' tuh make it? Yer time's up tomorrer."

"Never mind, I got a card up my sleeve that'll turn th' trick," was all the disclosure he would make.

Dawned finally the day of freedom. With a clang the big steel door opened for Binky and clanged shut behind him.

Now, he realized, was the time for action, did he wish to clinch his Christmas dinner rights. Viciously he launched a mighty kick at the jailer, unsuspectingly leading the way to the outer door. With a howl of rage the jailer turned and grasped the grinning Binky by the collar.

"Guess we ain't done with you yet, bo," he snarled, dragging him toward the cage.

"Glad yuh ain't," mocked the unwise Binky; "I'll git my share uh th' Christmas feed now."

"Oh, you will, hey? So that's your game; then here goes." With that he dragged the struggling Binky to the outer door and sent him sprawling on the snow-clad walk.

"Well, I'll be durned!" was his surprised comment, as he sat up and brushed the snow from face and hair. "My trump card was punk; all 'count uh shootin' off my lip. Durn me! Times is gittin' fierce when they fire a feller outuh th' can."

Sitting there in the loose snow he wept at the failure of his plans.

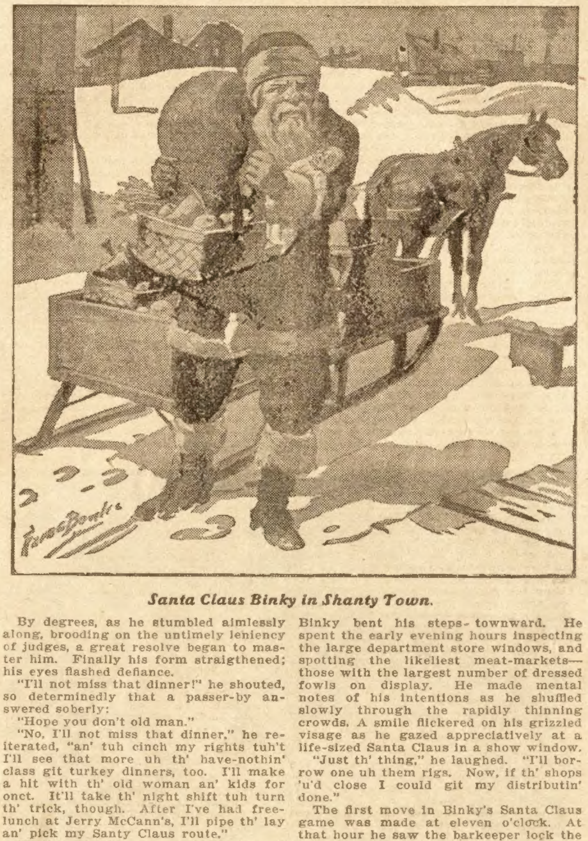
"Come now! Get out of this, or I'll send you to the morgue!"

Binky looked up. It was the angry jailer. The muzzle of his big "45" was in direct alignment with Binky's right eye.

"Huh-uh, no cold slab fer mine," he avowed positively, and sprinted down the street. Turning the corner he was out of range of the awful cannon.

A sudden realization of loneliness overpowered Binky. He longed for company—the companionship of the crowd. He struck out for the shopping district, and was soon in the midst of the holiday throng. But sympathy he found none. These merry folk were not his kind.

If misery loves company, this was most decidedly the wrong place to seek it. The vast crowd had no sympathy for the likes of him. They had their own Christmas plans to exploit. Their happy, contented looks exasperated him beyond measure, as he miserably slouched along, caring not whither he went. What had he to live for? Not even a Christmas dinner. Minus both money and friends, the best that he could hope for was a saloon free-lunch. No, not even that; the saloons would be closed on the morrow. As for his family; he feared to face his outraged wife with empty hand and pocket.



Santa Claus Binky in Shanty Town.

By degrees, as he stumbled aimlessly along, brooding on the untimely leniency of judges, a great resolve began to master him. Finally his form straigthened; his eyes flashed defiance.

"I'll not miss that dinner!" he shouted, so determinedly that a passer-by answered soberly:

"Hope you don't old man."

"No, I'll not miss that dinner," he reiterated, "an' tuh cinch my rights tuh't I'll see that more uh th' have-nothin' class git turkey dinners, too. I'll make a hit with th' old woman an' kids for onct. It'll take th' night shift tuh turn th' trick, though. After I've had free-lunch at Jerry McCann's, I'll pipe th' lay an' pick my Santy Claus route."

"Hullo Binky, out again?" greeted McCann.

"Fer God's sake, Jerry, quit joshin' an' dish me out a drink, quick! I've had thirty days uh th' dry-house."

One drink was donated, but no more could be coaxed out of the economical McCann. "Say," he spluttered, "if yer lookin' fer a charity shop, th' Salvation Army hangs out next door. What you need is grub, not booze, go bury yer face in th' free-lunch; th' sheriff's board has starved yuh."

Obediently Binky slouched over to the free articles and devoured a vast quantity, then returned to the charge.

"Give me just one more Jerry. I'm goin' to work tonight, an' I need somethin' fer a bracer."

"G'wan, yuh'll work better sober. What kind uh graft yuh got on?"

"Gimme a bottle an' I'll let yuh in on't."

"Git out! Skidoo!"

Unceremoniously Jerry opened the door and threw Binky into the street. For the second time that day he scrambled to his feet and brushed off the snow. Being on the bad books of all other drink dispensers, he did not risk another throw-out, but utilized what little remained of daylight in taking observations for the night's campaign.

First he strolled down to "Shanty Town," the city's extremest poverty haunt. Shanty Town was built in and around the tract of river bottom land used as a dumping ground for manure and refuse. The majority of the hovels were built of fence rails, packing boxes and other odds and ends of waste material, picked up on the dump. The numerous cracks were stuffed with paper and rags. Burlap and canvas were in general use for doors.

Binky gazed sadly at this hovel village and the ragged urchins playing among the snow-capped refuse mounds; then swore fiercely as he contrasted the cold human burrows with the millionaire mansions on the Avenue.

"What's them poor kidlets done tuh git treated like this? Maybe civilized folks stand fer such doin's, but low down boozer as I am, I'll put Christmas grub intuh them shacks if it gits me a lifer. Long's I got to board in th' jug, I might's well be in fer th' Robin Hood act, as fer swallowin' booze,' he moralized.

The night was already closing in as Binky bent his steps townward. He spent the early evening hours inspecting the large department store windows, and spotting the likeliest meat-markets—those with the largest number of dressed fowls on display. He made mental notes of his intentions as he shuffled slowly through the rapidly thinning crowds. A smile flickered on his grizzled visage as he gazed appreciatively at a life-sized Santa Claus in a show window.

"Just th' thing," he laughed. "I'll borrow one uh them rigs. Now, if th' shops 'u'd close I could git my distributin' done."

The first move in Binky's Santa Claus game was made at eleven o'clock. At that hour he saw the barkeeper lock the front door of the "Hurry Back" saloon. Binky lost no time in going around to the alley entrance of the place. He knew the "Hurry Back" fully as well as he did the county jail. Many a dollar that should have gone toward purchasing comforts for his neglected family had passed over its bar. His ever-growing degeneracy had deprived Binky of what little ambition he could once boast, and very soon he had no dollars to toss over the bar; then he became a ragged bum, and as such he was not allowed within the sacred precincts of the "gentleman's bar."

Binky removed his coat and covered the small pane of glass in the back door. As a quick blow of his fist drove the pane inward, the muffled clatter of broken glass was scarcely heard outside.

Perceiving a clear coast, Binky quickly pushed aside the bolt and entered the saloon. As he groped his way hurriedly past the rows of beer, wine, and whisky in the back room, he fought the fierce inclination to stave in a barrel and drink his fill. Pitiful were the pleadings of the dry inner man, but Binky valiantly fought the thirst and found his way to the till.

Owing to a heavy pre-Christmas trade, Binky collected an even thirty dollars. No gnawings of a troubled conscience disturbed him as he pocketed the silver and bills. "Wasn't he going to make others happy with it? Perhaps some of it would be returned to the families of the fools that had tossed it over the bar," he reasoned.

"I gottuh have just one drink," he croaked at the protesting inner voice. Seizing a pint bottle, he sampled the contents. It was port wine. Hurriedly he gulped down a quarter of the liquor, then resolutely set the bottle down. "I'm comin' back an' load up on that dope when my job's done." He smacked his lips approvingly as he left the place.

Arrived at the Grand department store, Binky soon gained entrance through a basement window and ascended to the first floor.

The "Grand" was one of those modern venderies that retail everything needed throughout a long life—from cradle to grave—both in the eating and wearing lines. It was here that Binky had seen the Santa effigy, and now his first act was to rob the dummy of its festive suit and transfer the same to his own rag-clad body. A large wall-mirror showed him that Santa Claus Binky was a decided improvement on Binky the bum.

In a packing-room Binky found several bags; then he commenced ransacking one department after the other. After filling the bags, he placed them beside a rear delivery door. In one sack were dolls and miscellaneous toys; two contained shirts and underwear; another children's garments.

From the grocery department he extracted a half-barrel of cranberries, a twenty-five-pound bin of coffee, and a bag of sugar. The baking department contributed a quantity of bread and doughnuts to the growing pile beside the door, and the meat department capped the heap with two dozen turkeys, a tub of lard, and several boiled hams. These he cut into quarters with a cleaver ere he dumped them into a sack.

The gift-choosing being finished, Santa Claus Binky adjusted the spring-lock of a front door to facilitate entrance on his return, then he went to arrange transportation for the joy-heap.

At the Elite Livery, the santafied Binky produced something resembling life in the comatose night man.

"Say! I want a team an' a driver in a hurry! It's worth ten dollars!"

"You're on, Santy. I'll hustle Jackson outah th' hay, an' we'll hitch up in a jiffy."

In ten minutes Jackson and Binky left the stable in a large bobsled. Bells jingled merrily on the backs of the impatient grays.

"Drive round tuh th' back," commanded Binky, as he dropped off before the "Grand." He entered and relocked the front door, and was opening the rear, when Jackson drove up. The goods were quickly transferred to the sled, and Binky was closing the door when the biting cold of the rising wind inspired added benevolence. From a dry-goods shelf he removed a stack of blankets and threw them on the load.

"Now hit 'er up lively fer Shanty Town," he ordered.

Jackson halted his team at the dump boundaries, and Binky selected an armload of gifts and started for a shack. As he drew near, the weak, pitiful wail of a child and a woman's earnest voice raised in supplication made him tiptoe to the door and listen.

"Oh, God, help us! Give us bread! We ask no luxuries, only bread, bread enough to keep life in our frozen bodies."

"Yeth, God, give us bread!" chimed in the childish lisp. "An' give uth back our papa, God."

"Yes, oh, God," pleaded the woman, "throw open his prison gates! He did not steal willingly! It was for me and Goldy. We were starving, God, and he stole in desperation! Oh, good, merciful God, give us bread ere 'tis too late!"

Binky could stand no more. He rapped lightly.

"Ith it God or papa?"

"Hush, child!"

As the woman opened the door, Binky staggered in and dropped his gifts on the table.

"Eat, woman, eat!" he urged brokenly, as the tears trickled behind his Santa Claus mask.

"Wonderful are the ways of the Lord!" chanted the woman in thankful relief, as she sliced bread and ham and gave the child. Undoubtedly she would have thought the Lord's ways extremely wonderful had she but known the source of the gifts.

"Thanty Caus good mans," lisped Goldy, as Binky, after a hurried glance around the empty shack, departed.

"I'm comin' back with a doll fer yuh, kiddo," he called back gruffly. Then under his breath: "It's hell! that's what. Why, th' old man in jail is a durned sight better off than his woman an' kid; an' say, I wonder if mine are as bad off. Hope not," he muttered uneasily.

"Drive up an' tie tuh that tree an' we'll rush things. Some uh these poor devils is 'bout all in."

Jackson did as commanded. Then both began distributing hams, fowls, and toys. Shanty Town was fully aroused now. The advent of sleigh-bells into their midst was no common event, especially at two o'clock in the morning. Each hovel door framed a curious head.

Oh, the dirty, miserable poverty of those human lairs! Even Binky, hardened rounder that he was, revolted at the sights their interiors afforded. Barefooted, half-naked children, stamped frozenly on the earthen floors. Piles of filthy rags, hay, or straw, was the nearest approach to beds that any shanty dweller could boast. Like starved wolves, both old and young fell upon the bread and ham as it was passed around; and oh, the joy-light the dolls and toys kindled in childish eyes! How old motherly eyes shone their mute thanks for warm garments and blankets!

The neediest received presents of money as long as the "Hurry Back's" money lasted. When everything but the sugar, coffee, lard, and cranberries, was distributed, Binky chose Goldy's mother to portion out these commodities. Goldy

(Continued on page thirteen.)

THE VANISHED CAPTAIN

Or, THE STOLEN RED EYE ⁂

By FRANK E. CHANNON

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CHAPTER XII.

MR. BIBBS IS CALLED IN.

STAMFORD was on hand ten minutes before the electric car was due, and a few minutes later the rumble of carriage wheels told that Judge Charrington was coming. The old jurist dismissed his coachman, after bidding him meet all trains after seven o'clock unless otherwise ordered by telephone, the Virginian's home being connected with the city.

The national capital was but sixteen miles to the north, and a thirty-minute trip brought them to Georgetown, where they at once boarded a car, and at a quarter to four reached the red-bricked Smithsonian building. Mr. Charrington sent in his card to the chief, Doctor Hemmings, who immediately ordered his admittance. A handshake and an introduction to Stamford, and then the Judge proceeded to explain the object of the visit.

"Permit me to see," requested the chief, evidently interested.

The curious clew was given him, and taking the powerful reading glass that lay on his desk, he minutely examined it.

"Sanskrit, and on papyrus, undoubtedly," he pronounced; "but modern, nevertheless," he added, with a tinge of disappointment in his tones. "Where did you find it?"

The story was briefly outlined to him, while he nodded as he comprehended the points, staying the recital now and again, as he flung out a query or asked for information. At the conclusion, without further comment, he struck his gong. A negro messenger entered.

"Richard, request Professor King to remain, and ask him as soon as he is at leisure kindly to come to me," he ordered.

With a respectful, "Yes, sar," the man went out, and the Doctor resumed his examination of the writing. In less than ten minutes a slight, fair young man of some thirty years appeared.

"You wish to see me, Doctor," he suggested.

"Be seated, Professor," invited the chief. "I have here a document, or, rather, a—well, there, look it over yourself, and see what you can make of it."

The fair young man—a student in every detail—seated himself, and using, as the Doctor had done, the powerful glass, carefully scrutinized the curiosity, the rest of the party remaining silent.

It was fifteen minutes before he raised his eyes, and glancing inquiringly at his chief pronounced: "A modern specimen of an old Sanskrit, I should say. What is your opinion, Doctor?"

Doctor Hemmings nodded his head in acquiescence. "And what is your translation, Professor?" he inquired.

"I can give you a free one now, but in order to find the literal, I should have to refer, sir. Would you wish that?"

"Suppose," suggested Doctor Hemmings, "that I write down here my version, and you do the same; then we can compare them and note the results."

Without further comment the Professor took notebook and pencil, writing slowly therein, while his chief scribbled more rapidly on a sheet of foolscap.

"Well," he inquired, glancing up, "how do we compare?"

"I have this, but recollect, Doctor, that I insist that mine is but a free translation; for the text I should have to study," and he read, with many a stop:

"That you have sinned, so must you suffer; that you are still sinning, so must you continue to suffer. That you are obstinate, so shall you be made as a reed. That you are exalted, so shall you be made lowly. The call has come to you. Ye have not heeded it; thrice has it come, and ye have been stubborn. Now has come the day of reckoning, when ye shall hearken; when ye shall cease to be stubborn when your sins shall be shown to you. The net is spread in your sight. Yet shall ye fly to it and its meshes shall entrap you. For the great sin that ye did in the year that is long past, now shall ye repent and make amends, oh, ye perverse and stubborn man! Think not to escape by——"

"Have you the remainder of it, Doctor? It is torn here, you will observe?"

Doctor Hemmings glanced up at the Judge, who shook his head.

"No," said Stamford, as the chief looked at him. "That is all I found."

"You have practically my translation; I don't know that it is necessary to get the literal, is it, Judge? I imagine that for your purpose the free will be of more service than the exact words."

"Quite so," agreed Mr. Charrington.

"Is that all the service I can be to you, Judge?"

"I think so, and I am sure that both Mr. Hamilton and myself are indebted to you, Doctor. We have stumbled across a very curious case, and this communication may be of great value to us in fathoming it. I will bid you good evening, Doctor, and you, Mr. King. Believe me, I am under great obligation to you both."

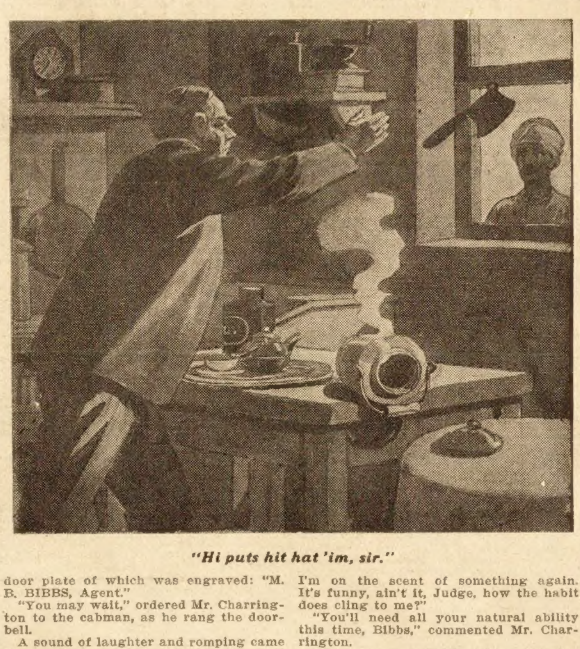
"Delighted, Judge — both Professor King and myself are delighted to have been of any service to you."

The good-bys were said, and Mr. Charrington and Stamford left the room.

"Now," said the Judge, as they found themselves outside, "I want to ask your permission, Stamford, my lad, to employ a man—in fact, a detective; one whom I have had occasion to call in consultation in many of my cases when I was practicing—a Mr. Bibbs. I have a high opinion of his ability, and I can assure you I have reason for it; he has shone a light on many a dark place for me in the years gone past. Suppose, with your permission, we call a hack and go out to see him; it is possible we may find him in. He lives northeast, some distance from here."

"I am entirely in your hands, sir. I feel that as the friend of my uncle you will do what you consider best."

In a few minutes a hack was taking the pair rapidly out to the eastern-lying part of Washington. They passed away from the fashionable part of the city, and drove past long rows of small, neat houses, all built in similar fashion, until presently the driver pulled up before a modest little house, on the brass door plate of which was engraved: "M. B. BIBBS, Agent."



"Hi puts hit hat 'im, sir."

"You may wait," ordered Mr. Charrington to the cabman, as he rang the doorbell.

A sound of laughter and romping came from within; it ceased as the bell clanged, and a moment later a stout, red-faced man appeared. He was in his shirtsleeves, and a corncob pipe projected in sporty fashion from between his clean-shaven lips. His face lighted up with genuine pleasure as he observed who his visitor was.

"Why, Judge!" he exclaimed. "Come right in, sir; come along in; it does me good to see you again; it does, 'pon me word, sir. Here, you kids, get out of the way. Missis, here's the Judge. Where's a chair? And who's your young friend?" he demanded, as his eyes fell on Stamford.

"Mr. Hamilton—a countryman of yours, by the way," responded Mr. Charrington, as he introduced Stamford.

"Jolly glad to meet you, sir—jolly glad! By Jinks, you find us sons of Johnny Bull everywhere, don't you? They say as Peary found one a-sitting top of the north pole when he got there, but he didn't like to say anything about it; fact, so they say. Well, now, Judge, and what brought you out such a rotten night; thought you had shook all business in my line years ago." So the jolly old chap rattled on, scarcely giving the Judge a moment in which to get in a word.

"Well, it's business all right this time, Bibbs," he managed at last to say.

"Ah," grunted Mr. Bibbs, rubbing his fat little palms together. "I'm with you, sir; I'm with you; come right along into my room. Mrs. Bibbs, give us a light. A light there, Missis."

In the detective's room Mr. Charrington again went over the story of the disappearance of Captain Hamilton, while the little man's face remained absolutely expressionless. Occasionally one of his little beady eyes would close, and he would shoot a wink at nobody in particular; or again he would take out a huge red handkerchief and blow his little pug nose vigorously.

When the Judge at length stopped and announced: "So there you have it all, Bibbs, just as much as we know," he said not a word, but rolled out nimbly from the room, reappearing a few minutes later wrapped up in an enormous gray ulster, and protected around the throat by a red muffler. In his hand he grasped a gnarled ash walking cane. His headgear consisted of a squatty, wide-brimmed hat. He looked a typical Johnny Bull.

"I'm ready," he announced, solemnly. "Good-by, Missis." He stopped as he went through the sittingroom, and impressed a smacking kiss upon the comely face of his wife; then, in turn, did a like service to each of five robust-looking children, who were ranged up in file, like so many steps.

The door slammed behind the trio, and a moment later the hack was whirling them rapidly away into the night. Mr. Bibbs drew from his pocket a big drop pipe, and solemnly loading it from his pouch, lighted it with equal deliberation, then sent forth great clouds of blue smoke. "There," he announced presently, "I'm happy; never so happy as when I'm on the scent of something again. It's funny, ain't it, Judge, how the habit does cling to me?"

"You'll need all your natural ability this time, Bibbs," commented Mr. Charrington.

"Yes, yes, but that's where the fun comes in; 'tis small satisfaction running on a plain trail. 'Tis when Master Reynard doubles and twists and turns, and takes to the running water, as the real sport comes in, sir; that's so, ain't it?"

"You have always appeared to find it that way."

"'Tis a might poor light in this cab, sir, but I think as I'll just study that scrap of paper again, sir, by your leave," observed the detective. "Oh, thanks."

There was silence in the hack now. The streets were filling up with people going to the theaters, and the cab rolled along over the smooth asphalt pavement westward towards Georgetown. As the twinkling bridge lights appeared the great clock from the college chimed out the hour of eight, and glancing up from his scrutiny, Mr. Bibbs complained, resentfully: "The scent's twenty-four hours cold! Hang it!" he exclaimed, as he finished.

There was a delay of fifteen minutes waiting for a car to take them to Reeves, where, once arrived, they found the Judge's carriage waiting, as ordered, the negro standing by, flopping his arms as he endeavored to keep himself warm. The horses were blanketed, and two bright lamps gleamed on either side of the vehicle.

"Captain Hamilton's cottage," ordered the Judge, and they were being jolted over the uneven Virginian roads in another few moments. Their destination was reached in twenty minutes, then, after a hasty cup of coffee and a snack,

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the trio shut themselves in the snug room, where the missing man had spent so much of his time.

The deputy and his helpers had gone, and only the quiet footsteps of old Peter, and now and again the low growl of Siguford, disturbed the stillness of the night.

CHAPTER XIII.

CROSS-EXAMINATION.

Mr. Bibbs was garrulous again after his refreshments.

"'Tis clear," he asserted, "as there was some one as had their knife into the Captain; some one or somebodies as wanted him to do something, else why did he get this sort of a letter? Of course, of course," he went on, talking hurriedly and low, "that's all clear. But he wouldn't do it, so they come to fetch him—fetch him in a hurry, too, for he has no time to put any clothes on. Did you notice that towel as was lying on the trunk? The lackey says he found that on the carpet and put it there. There was a big sponge right on the back of the door, and one o' them scratch-yer-back-things—no, didn't see it? Well, I did. His bathing robe was hanging on a hook, too, and Peter says as that was on the chair when he first went in. Sure, the Captain was going to take a bath; probably stripped himself all ready when he gets a call from these gents—that's how it comes as he ain't got any togs on; that's easy."

"Yes," mused Mr. Charrington.

"Cert," emphatically declared the detective.

"It is very probable," agreed Stamford; "he was preparing for your visit, you know, sir."

"Yes," declared Mr. Bibbs, "he was preparing for a visit all right, but he wasn't expecting a visit from these gents; reckon as he wasn't doing a whole lot of thinking, anyway, 'cording to the shape as you say he was in, sir. Anyway, he wouldn't be looking for a visit from aloft, eh?"

"It's easy so far," agreed the Judge, "but you haven't scratched the intricate features of the case yet, Bibbs."

"No, I ain't yet; I can scratch a lot of 'em, though, sitting right here in this room, but when I dig for 'em I'll have to get outside. I ain't saying as I've got things down pat, but I'm just looking at it reasonable-like, and taking it step at at a time. It ain't no u to jump the whole blooming flight at one go."

"Go on," urged Mr. Charrington, "let's hear your theory, Bibbs."

"Well, he gets a surprise packet dropped from up there, from the hole, which there ain't no reason in supposing as he knew was there, 'course not; but I want to speak with my friend the lackey before I go any further."

Peter came in answer to the summons, and stood rubbing his hands, nervous and uneasy as ever.

"My man," commenced Mr. Bibbs, "will you kindly drop yourself in that leather-backed chair and answer a few questions for me?"

"Who, me, sir?" exclaimed Peter, thoughtlessly.

"Surely, now, who else? Now don't you go getting excited and licking your chops like that. No one's going to hurt you, and the cooler you keep the better chance there'll be of my finding your master. Sit down, I say, and Judge, how 'bout letting him have a drink? Strikes me as he needs one."

"Hi just took one, sir," admitted Peter.

"Did, eh? Well, maybe that's what the trouble is. Perhaps you're taking too many, Peter; I thought it was a case of not enough. Now, then, tell me, had you any reason to suppose as that hole was there in the ceiling?"

"No, sir. Hi didn't know hit, sir; never saw hit, sir, until they busted hit open."

"All right. Now, tell me, why did you remain in the lower hall all the time the Captain was upstairs. I am told you remained there; you said so to Mr. Hamilton."

Peter shifted uneasily in his chair. "Hi—hi——" he began.

"Go on."

"Hi stayed there, sir, because Hi was feeling kinder, kinder uneasy, as you might say, sir."

"Why?" shot Mr. Bibbs, as quick as a flash, and his little, close-set eyes seemed to snap fire.

"Well sir, Hi—Hi kinder 'ad a curious kinder feelin' has everythin' weren't jus' right, sir."

"What made you have that feeling that everything wasn't just right?"

"Well, sir, Hi knows has you'll laugh hat me, sir, but hit's God's hown truth, sir. Hi saw a—a—Hi 'ad—that is, Hi 'ad been a-seein' some one or somebodies hidlin' 'bout the 'ouse, sir."

"When?" Mr. Bibbs shot the question out like the crack of a rifle, and Peter jumped as if he had been hit. It was surprising the change that had come over this mild-looking, almost grotesque-appearing man. He had been heretofore simply a fat, jolly little man. Now he was like the hound on the track of his prey.

"Fur two days, sir," answered the butler, passing his hand over his forehead.

"The day the Captain was missed and the day before, you mean?"

"Yes, sir. Hi means that."

"Now, tell me; who was it you saw idling, as you say, about the place. What was he like? In what part of the place did he idle? It is important we know."

"Hit were two on 'em, sir—leastways, Hi never saw 'em together, but they was different."

"You mean different in appearance?"

"Yes, sir, jus' so, sir."

"Come now, tell me, I want to get along as quickly as possible. Who were they—two men, two women, two tramps?"

"No, sir, they wasn't tramps," declared Peter, with conviction. "They was—well, sir, they was 'ere—and they wasn't, as you might say. Hi'd see 'em, hand when Hi'd go ter look hat 'em again, sir, they wasn't there."

"Oh, come now," encouraged Mr. Bibbs, his little close-set features expanding into a grin, "Come, now, Peter, give me something I can understand. Where did you see them first?"

"'Twas hon the morning before the Captain went—the day before, sir; I was burning some trash just back hof the ole barn, when Hi chanced ter look hup, sir, hand Hi seed two hof the most hoddest-looking chaps has Hi hever saw, sir. They was hin white, yes, white, sir, hand didn't wear no trousers nor nothin'. They 'ad a kinder a sheet—yes, a sheet, sir, twisted 'bout 'em, so ter speak. Hi 'ad just bin reading 'bout them night-riders, sir, hin the master's paper, hand Hi was some took a back, sir, but Hi 'ollers ter 'em, hand says Hi, say Hi: 'Hey, there,' says Hi, 'wot do you want?' Well, sir, you may believe it hor not, sir, just has you've a mind ter, sir, but they wasn't there; they'd gone."

"Gone!" echoed the detective, for the first time showing some surprise. "What do you mean by that, Peters? Gone where?"

"They naturally vanished into thin air, I suppose you mean."

"Yes, sir, that's wot Hi means, sir, Hi suppose."

"Strike you as being at all odd that they should get away in that fashion, Peter?"

"Yes, sir! Hi was that taken a-back, sir, that Hi didn't know where Hi was a-standing fur a minute, ~~sir~~; then Hi says ter meself,' says Hi: 'Don't you stand fur nothin' like that, Peter Know,' says Hi to myself; hand Hi collars the rake, has Hi'd 'ad in me 'ands, sir, tendin' ter the fire with, and Hi get after 'em. But though Hi runs hall 'bout, sir, hand hout has fur has the gate, hand down ter the spring, Hi never so much has catched a sight o' 'em, hand that's God's hown truth, sir."

"Well, what came next?"

"Nothing came, sir—leastways, not then; but later in the day—'twas just afore tea time, sir—hand Hi was hin the kitchen, sir, a-fixin' the Captain a cup hof tea, sir, a-'opin' has 'e might fancy hit, sir, when Hi looks hup, sir, and s'helpme God, sir, there was a nawsty brown face a-looking hin hat the winder, sir, hat me. Hit gave me such a start, sir, that Hi dropped the kettle Hi was a-pouring the water hout from, sir; but me sense come back again next second, sir, hand Hi hups with the meat cleaver, has was lyin' handy, sir, hand Hi puts hit at 'im, sir——"

"Oh, so that's how the window was broken, then," interrupted Stamford.

"Yes, sir, that's 'ow 'twas smashed, but 'e'd gone, sir."

"What, gone again?' inquired Mr. Bibbs.

"Yes, sir, gone again, s'helpme God!" declared Peter, very seriously.

"And then?"

"Me blood was hup, sir," asserted Peter, valiantly, "hand Hi grabs me butcher's knife from the stack, sir, hand Hi gets hout after 'im, an' says Hi ter meself, says Hi, 'Ye bloody devil,' says Hi, 'w'oever ye be, Hi'll get ye,' an' Hi chases meself hall 'bout, sir, but never a sight of the bleedin' loafer did Hi catch."

The butler, in the excitement of the recital, had completely forgotten his usual servile manner, and was talking straight from his heart.

"Good for you," congratulated Mr. Bibbs. "I'm glad you had so much sand, Peter, but it was too bad you couldn't have found the chap, eh?"

"Hif hi'd 'a got 'im, Hi'd 'ave killed the bugger," vowed the butler.

"Well, was that all?'

"That was hall—leastways, that was hall that day, sir, but next morning soon after the Captain 'ad come hout, sir, hof 'is room, Hi 'eard a most curious sort o' a sound, sir."

"Ah!" hissed the detective, leaning forward and becoming very much interested. "Yes, go on."

"Yes, sir, a most curious sort o' a sound, sir—a kinder o' raspin' sound, sir, but do hall Hi could, sir, Hi couldn't tell w'ere it come from. Hi 'eard hit hall the mornin', sir, hon hand hoff, hand the dog, sir, was a-prowling 'bout, hunheasy, has ye might say, sir, but 'e couldn't seem ter get onto hit, sir, and then 'e'd come ter me, sir, and look hup in me face, sir, much has to say, 'W'ere be the noise, Peter?' hand Hi got that most huneasy, sir, Hi made hup me mind, sir, has Hi'd go hand tell Master Stamford, hand so Hi did, sir—leastways, Hi went ter 'is room, sir, but 'e'd gone hout, an' when 'e come back, sir, 'e'd met with some sort o' han haccident, so 'e say, sir, an' then 'e went hupstairs, sir, hand Hi saw the Captain go hup just after the Judge come, sir, hand Hi can swear has 'e never come down again, sir, an' that hall Hi knows, sir, so'elpme God."

"Well, that's quite a lot to know, anyway, Peter—quite a lot to know."

"Yes, sir, jus' so, sir," responded the butler, rather at a loss to know if the words were spoke in commendation or censure.

"Now, Mr. Hamilton, will you please give me a little account of that accident Peter speaks of. I would like to get it from your own lips. You stay here, Peter, I may want you again."

Peter had somewhat recovered his composure, as he talked, and now settled back with a sigh of satisfaction. The man really possessed some character, but the events of the past thirty-six hours had badly shaken his nerves. He listened attentively as young Stamford related to Mr. Bibbs his adventure of the afternoon immediately preceding the disappearance of Captain Hamilton.

"And I really couldn't say but what I did slip in, after all, you know," confessed the young Englishman, at the conclusion of his story; "but—but—well, I'm pretty dead sure I didn't," he added, in apparent contradiction. "You know, the affair all happened in a moment; my feet went from under me, and I was going down over those rocks before a fellow could say Jack Robinson; it may be that my back struck a tree or some bush, but I'll swear it does seem to me that some one helped me along, or rather, started me first with a jolly good shove. It was a rum affair, I must say."

The detective had never removed his eyes from the young man's face, as he spoke; he seemed to be reading his very thoughts. It was a very different Mr. Bibbs now from the jolly little chap they had first met out in the northeast section of Washington. His little eyes almost met; his brows were lowered, and his red face drawn into a hundred wrinkles.

"All right," he chuckled, as Stamford concluded. "That's all, sir. Now then, gentlemen, I'll take a nap, and in the Captain's room, if you please. No, don't make up the bed or touch it in any way, Peter; I'll go right up there and use it as it is. Where's the key?"

"If you are going to sleep on it, Bibbs, I'll go home and follow your example," announced Mr. Carrington; "unless," he added, "you think I can be of any assistance to you. Can I?"

"No, thank you sir, not tonight; but I'd like to be in touch with you and the boys—the boys who went with you today. How can I reach you all in a hurry if I want to?"

"By messenger—Peter, or any one you can get; there's no 'phone here, you know."

CHAPTER XIV.

SOME TALL THINKING.

"The biggest lamp you have, Peter, and some paper," requested Mr. Bibbs, as he passed the butler on his way upstairs.

When supplied with the requisites, the detective carefully closed the blinds and secured the trapdoor above his head with a stout piece of cord. For a while the blue clouds of smoke ascended from his corncob pipe, and his features assumed a pained, a pleased, a puzzled, or a pleasant expression, according to the way his thoughts ran.

"Which end? Which end?" he muttered to himself. "The front or the back? There's always two ends to every tangle." He stopped and pulled viciously at his clean-shaven chin. "Best start at the beginning," he snorted, as he arose carefully, and moving as quietly as a mouse, donned his greatcoat, jammed his hat on his head, drew on a pair of gauntlets, and crept noiselessly from the room.

He aroused Stamford Hamilton, and after a whispered conference, the two made their way out and away from the cottage, leaving old Peter blissfully unconscious of their departure.

Two o'clock had sounded from the clock at Reeves before they returned, the detective retiring as noiselessly as ever to his room while Stamford, too, again sought his bed.

"Now, let's see," he resumed, in a low mutter, as he made himself comfortable at the little table, and pulled slowly at his pipe. "He fell in. Did he fall in, or was he shoved? It's clear from his manner as he thinks he was put in. He's a young man of pretty clear mind; reckon he knows what he's talking about. If he fell in, of course, it has nothing to do with this affair, but if he was pushed in, why then, it had everything to do with it. I take the chance, and assume as he was shoved in. Then the first part of the game fell short, for he got out again. Course, they might have knifed him. Why didn't they? Dead men, with cuts in 'em, is a nasty thing to account for; drowned men don't want no explanation." Mr. Bibbs was jotting something down on the paper in front of him, as he reasoned. "They wouldn't know as the captain had a date; why should they?" he resumed. "So they figures as they'll get him just after the young man's drowned; they don't reckon on him turning up again. Of course, the door in the ceiling was there before—that was the scraping noise as Peter talks about; when they was gettin' through the roof. Now, when did the

(Continued on page fifteen.)

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The Christmas Spirit.

Hokus—"Do you expect to spend a pleasant Christmas?"

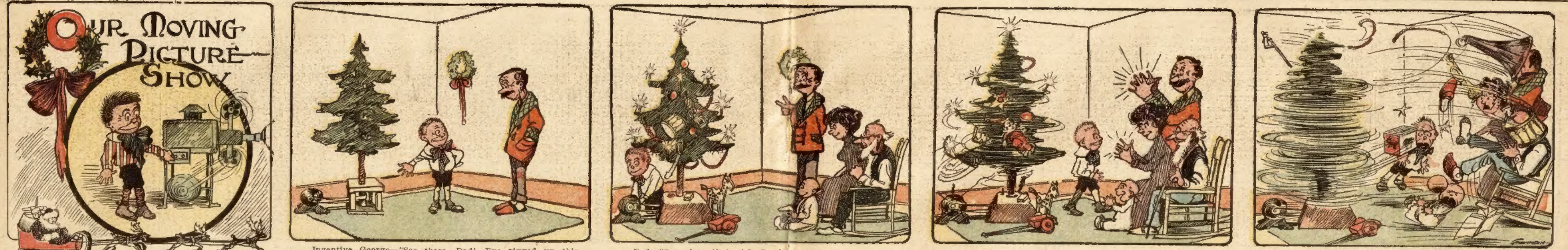
Pokus—"I ought to. That's about all I have left to spend."

Sure Enough.

Mrs. Chinn—"You know my husband just won't listen to good common sense talk?"

Mrs. Frank—"How do you know?"

THE REVOLVING TREE.



Inventive George—"See there, Dad! I've rigged up this washing machine motor so it will turn the tree and show all the presents."

Dad—"Some boy, that, eh? See how nicely the tree turns."

"Sonny, that's the cleverest idea I ever——"

(Swish! Biff!) "Ouch! George, stop it! Now, see what comes of your foolishness!"

Good Guess.

"He talks a good deal to me about his platonic regard for me."

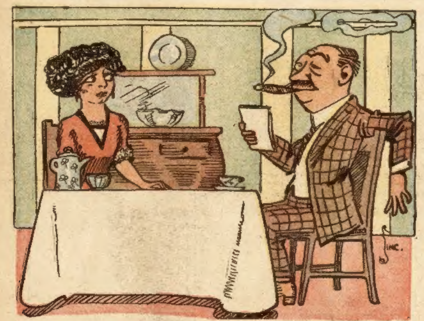
"What does that mean?"

"A calendar for Christmas."

In Boston.

Teacher—"Waldo, name one of the best known characters of fiction."

Waldo (aged 5, superciliously)—"Santa Claus!"—Puck.



Mr. Suburba—"It was pretty nice of Mrs. Brown to invite us."

Mrs. Suburba—"And just think, she only wants to borrow our percolator, a dozen knives, the berry set and punch bowl."

A Mean Man.

An Osborne man once let his wife go visiting her folks. The first week she was there he took the home paper and cut out a piece and sent the paper to her. She wondered and wondered and wondered. The next week he did the same thing. She at once packed her telescope and hurried home.

He told her it was only a joke and he smiled behind her back for a week.

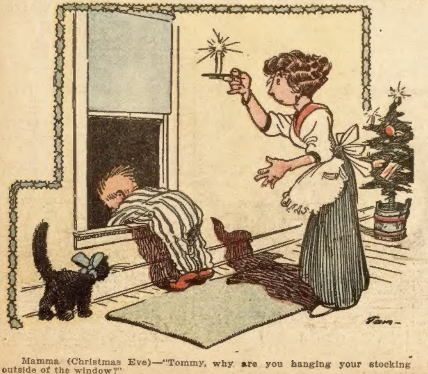
Liked Excitement.

Mr. Gotham—"Why don't you live in the city?"

Mr. Suburb—"Can't stand city life. Too dull. I couldn't exist without excitement."

"Mr. Gotham—"Huh! What excitement do you get by living in Jersey?"

Mr. Suburb—"Oh, ferryboat and subway collisions, railroad smash-ups, and lots of things."



Mamma (Christmas Eve)—"Tommy, why are you hanging your stocking outside of the window?"

Tommy—"I asked Santa Claus to bring me a box of chocolate ice-cream, and it would melt in this hot room."

WILLIAM, HIGHFLYER.

Young William plead, cajoled and sighed,
He did not ask in vain;
To him, on Christmas, was supplied
A nice, new aeroplane.

He flew it to a fearful height,
But did not do it long—
Which is the reason why I write
This aeroplaintive song!

A New Point.

"Every student of history knows that our Christmas customs are a development of the Roman Saturnalia."

"Oh, surely not all!"

"I think so."

"No, no! There's no reason to suppose, for instance, that the Romans were all the time being hunched to do their Saturnalian shopping early."—Puck.

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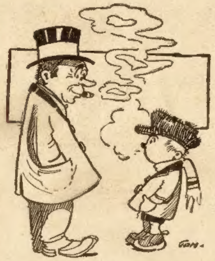


"Which do you prefer, Johnnie, Christmas or Fourth of July?"

"If I git burned I like Christmas best, but after everything's et up and I have the stomachache I'd rather it was the Fourth."

Too Imperious.

Miss Struckile—"Mother, you are too imperious in your behavior."

Mrs. Struckile—"Too which?"

Miss Struckile—"You shouldn't order people around the way you do."

Mrs. Struckile—"I'm rich enough."

Miss Struckile—"Yes; but I'm afraid folks will suspect that you began life as a cook?"

A Gentle Reminder.

Instead of the usual just-before-Christmas letter to Santa Claus, Robbie wrote a prayer letter to God. After enumerating the many and varied presents he wanted very much, he concluded with: "Remember, God, the Lord loveth a cheerful giver."

Christmas Dawn.

He roused from sleep with terror fraught,
And at the awful sounds he thought
The time of judgment come!
Then he remembered he had bought
His little son a drum!

At Bedtime.

Little Girl—"What'd you get for Christmas?"

Little Boy—"A lot o' toys, an engine, whole lots of candy, nuts, an' cake, an' a dose of castor oil."—Judge.

His Favorite Limerick.

President-elect Wilson is not reputed to be a handsome man, and he knows it. His favorite limerick is this:

"For beauty I am not a star,
There are others more handsome by far,
But my face I don't mind it,
For I am behind it,
It's the others in front that I jar."

Human Nature.

"Why is it," asked the curious guest, "that poor men usually give larger tips than rich men?"

"Well, suh," said the waiter, who was something of a philosopher as well, "looks to me like de po' man don't want nobody to find out he's po', and de rich man don't want nobody to find out he's rich."

Sacrifice.

"An' that ungrateful boy of mine," whimpered the man in the prisoner's dock. "After all the sacrifices I've made for him he refuses to pay my fine."

"What sacrifices did you make for him?" asked the attorney.

"What sacrifices? Didn't I let him earn his way through college?"

Was Good for Murderer.

"You ought to be glad that you will be electrified instead of hanged," said a prison visitor to a convicted murderer.

"Why?" asked the felon, in surprise.

"You suffer greatly from rheumatism, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, electricity is the best known remedy for that."

He Thanked Heaven.

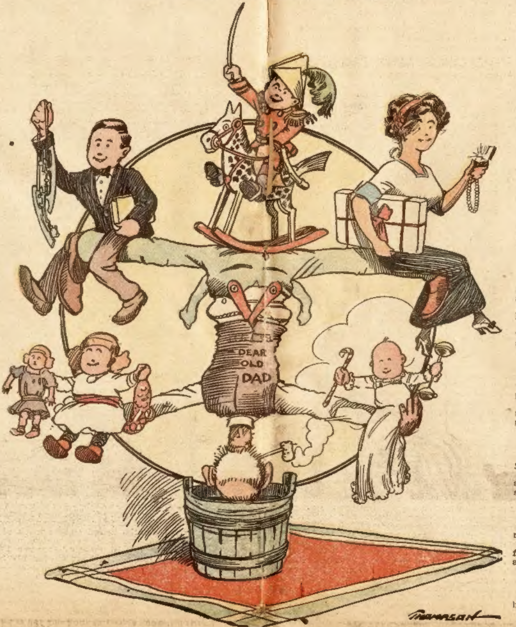
Three men were talking about their religious beliefs the other evening.

"I am a Unitarian and proud of it," said the first.

"I am a Catholic, born and bred," said the second.

The third looked at the other two with an expression of contempt and shouted: "I am an atheist, thank Heaven!"

THE FAMILY CHRISTMAS TREE.



The Prisoner's Pet.

Prison Missionary—"Ah, you have a pet, I see."

Convict—"Yes, this rat. I feeds him every day. I think more of that 'ere rat than any livin' creature."

Missionary—"Ah, in every man there's something of the angel left, if one can only find it. How came you to take such a fancy to that rat?"

Convict—"He bit th' keeper."

GET IN LINE.

Forget the bills
That send such thrills
Across your spine;
So get in line,
Remove the lid
And be a kid.

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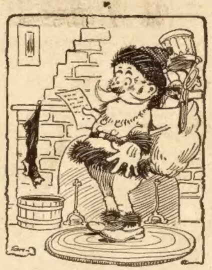


Santa (reading note)—"Dear Santa: My ma's too busy at her bridge club to darn my stockin's, but go right ahead."

Kitty's Hat.

On Christmas morning small Kitty found that Santa Claus had brought her a new hat.

"How do you like it, dear?" queried her mother.

"Oh," replied Kitty, "I like it pretty well—all but the color and the trimming and the shape."

Too Sudden.

"Sammy," said his mean uncle, "how would you feel if I were to give you a penny for your Christmas?"

"I think," said Sammy, "that I should feel a little faint at first, but I'd try to get over it."

Playing It Safe.

Madge—"Are you going to announce your engagement at once?"

Marjorie—"Gracious, no! Not until after Christmas. I'm afraid it would scare off a lot of presents."—Judge.

Modern Facilities.

Mrs. Cobwigger—"What was all that noise you were making on the roof?"

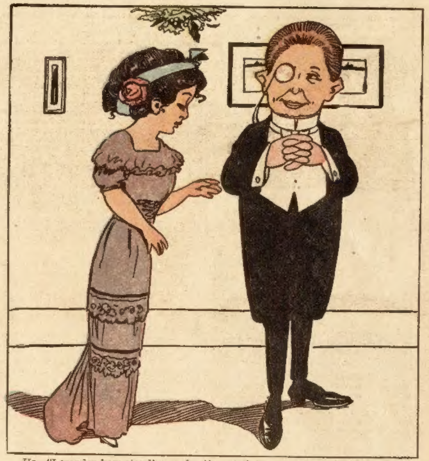
Freddy—"I was building an aerodrome for Santa Claus, so he could land in his airship near our chimney."—Judge.

A Bad Boy.

"I fear that boy of mine is incorrigible."

"What now?"

"He wants to send Santa Claus a black hand letter."



He—"I wonder how standing under the mistletoe ever came to mean an invitation to kiss a girl?"

She—"Oh, bother going into the history of things. Just act."

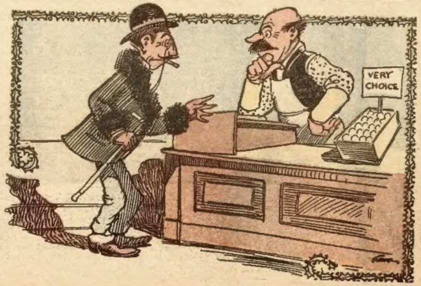
Poor Father.

"Well, what did you get on Christmas?"

"A notice from the bank that my account was overdrawn."—Judge.

Never to Be Forgotten.

It's foolish to be extravagant at Christmas. If you really wish your friends to remember it, give them a cheap present.



Customer—"I want to give her a useful present that costs enough to make it worth while."

Department Store Salesman—"What do you say to a dozen strictly fresh eggs?"

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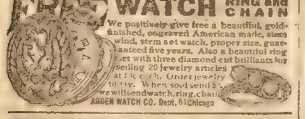

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In Days of Stress

Or, WAR IN THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY :-: By EMMA HOWARD WIGHT

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CHAPTER XIV.

FRIEND AGAINST FRIEND.

ON THE afternoon of the 22d day of September, General Sheridan attacked General Early at Fisher's Hill. The Confederates were taken by surprise. They held a very strong position on Fisher's Hill, and had anticipated an attack. To attack the Confederates from the front, Sheridan's forces would have had to cross a run, known as Tumbling Run, and climb Fisher's Hill in the very face of the enemy's artillery. But Sheridan took a circuitous route, and attacked the Confederates on the flank. Early was taken at a disadvantage, but the Confederates fought desperately, making a stubborn resistance.

The battle was at its height when Lieutenant Allen arrived on the scene from the signal station. He sighed as he gave a quick, comprehensive glance over the battlefield.

"We may hold out a little longer," he murmured; "but the Federals will be again victorious."

He touched his horse with the spur, and dashed into the thickest of the fight. Bravely, valiantly, he fought, and for a time, seemed to bear a charmed life. But as the sun was beginning to sink behind Massanutten and its crimson glow shone upon the scene of carnage and death, Lieutenant Allan's horse was shot from under him. Before he could recover and get upon his feet, he received a bayonet thrust in the shoulder, and fell back unconscious, bleeding profusely.

After a time he came to himself. A soldier in Federal uniform was standing beside him. Lieutenant Allan lifted his heavy eyes to the Federal's face.

"Robert Stuart!" he exclaimed.

Captain Stuart gravely inclined his head. A bitter smile passed over Lieutenant Allan's pale face.

"So I am to die at the hand of a renegade," he exclaimed.

"You believe that I struck you down?" queried Captain Stuart. "You are mistaken. I found you only a moment ago, and thought that you were dead. Thank God you are not!"

"I cannot see why you should rejoice at that." taunted Carlisle Allan. "You wear the blue of the North, I the gray of the South. We are enemies, foes. Why do you remain here, idle? There are Confederates, men of the South, to be slain. You will see the sun go down upon a Federal victory, here at the very gates of your home. Go! leave me! I prefer to die alone."

"I cannot leave you, Carlisle," declared Captain Stuart. "I can stop the bleeding from that wound and save your life."

"No," said Lieutenant Allan, bitterly. "I prefer death to life at your hands."

"So be it," acquiesced Captain Stuart, with great sadness. "I cannot force my services upon you. I leave you in the hands of God."

He was about to turn away, when a piece of shell came whizzing through the air and struck him down. He fell a few feet from where Carlisle lay. A revulsion of feeling swept over the latter. All the bitterness died; the old love returned. He lifted himself on his elbow and looked toward the man who had been his dearest friend. Captain Stuart lay very still, his colorless face upturned to the gold and crimson skies.

Lieutenant Allan began to drag himself toward Captain Stuart. Every movement caused him exquisite torture but he persevered, the cold sweat of agony rolling down his pale face. He was some little time dragging himself the short distance that lay between him and Captain Stuart, but, at length he reached his side. He leaned over him, gazing yearningly into the white still face.

"Robert," he murmured, "Robert, friend!" Then he fell forward unconscious, his head on Captain Stuart's breast.

The sun sank behind the mountain, twilight threw a gray pall over the horrors of the battlefield. The Confederates were in retreat. The second victory of the Valley Campaign was Sheridan's.

CHAPTER XV.

"I AM GOING TO MY SON."

At Linden, while the battle raged, Dorothy, pale, but composed, sat beside Mrs. Allan, holding her trembling hand, trying to compose and comfort her. At about twilight, Uncle David came into the room.

"De Yankees done beat," he announced, regretfully. "Dey'se chasin' ob 'Federates up de tu'npike to'ard Woodstock."

Dorothy sighed. Mrs. Allan wrung her hands and wept.

"My boy! my boy!" she moaned. "Have they killed him? What shall I do? How shall I bear this dreadful suspense?"

"I'se gwine to de battlefiel', mistis," declared Uncle David. "I'se gwine to look fo' de young massa. Dat's what dat boy, Podge, would hab done."

"Yes, go, Uncle David," said Dorothy. "Perhaps you can bring us news of Carlisle." As the old darky was about to go out she stopped him. "Mr. Robert was in that battle, Uncle David," she added. "I would like to have news of him, also"

"Ya as, ma'am, ya'as, Miss Dorothy," said Uncle David, and then he went out.

He returned in about an hour and found Dorothy waiting for him on the porch. Mrs. Allan, worn out with the excitement and agitation of the day, had fallen asleep

Uncle David dropped down exhausted upon the step of the porch.

"De young massa ain't killed, Miss Dorothy," he said.

"Thank God!" whispered Dorothy

"You must 'scuse me, Miss Dorothy," continued Uncle David, "but I'se nigh 'bout played out. I know dat wah war a terr'ble thing, but I nebber jest knowed how terr'ble it war till I done seed dat battlefiel' tonight. Oh, de awfulest, pitifulest sights. I don't see how de good, kind Lawd up thar kin let sich things be. Listen, Miss Dorothy," he leaned forward, "you kin heah de groanin' and de groanin' ob de wounded and de dyin'."

"Yes, Uncle David, I have been standing here listening," said Dorothy, very sadly, "and wondering if my brother and Robert Stuart were there in agony, perhaps dying."

"Mist' Robert, he am alibe, too," declared the old darky, "but he'se wusser off dan de young massa. Dey'se bofe at de hospital in Strasburg. When I war lookin' fo' de young massa and Mist' Robert, I done come 'cross Kunnel Warwick. He done tole me dat Marse Carli'le and Mist' Robert been took to de hospital in Strasburg."

"They are wounded?"

"Ya'as, ma'am. Dat Yankee kunnel sade dey war found lyin' togedder. Marse Carli'le's hade war 'cross Mist' Robert's breast. I'se offen seed 'em layin' dat a-way when dey war chillen, Miss Dorothy."

"Did Colonel Warwick say whether they are badly wounded, Uncle David?" asked Dorothy, showing no impatience at the old man's digressions, though she was in great suspense.

"He sade de young massa warn't." He paused a moment, and then added, reluctantly, "but dat Mist' Robert war in a mighty bad fix, and it warn't lak'y he'd pull through."

Dorothy stood for a moment very pale and still, then she said; "I must go to him."

"You wants me to go 'long wid you, don't you, young mistis?" asked Uncle David, eagerly.

"Yes, you can come with me, Uncle David," replied Dorothy. "But you must first go to Fernley and tell them about Robert. When you return I shall be ready to start for the hospital."

When Uncle David reached Fernley he was shown into the livingroom where Charles Stuart lay upon his couch, and his wife sat near him, very white, with her trembling hands locked together on her lap.

"Good ebenin'," said Uncle David, standing in the doorway, with his hat in his dark, knotted hands.

"Good evening, Uncle David," Charles Stuart responded, but Mrs. Stuart did not speak. She sat looking at Uncle David with a great dread in her eyes.

The old darky hesitated as he looked at her. She arose and came toward him.

"You bring me news of my boy?" she exclaimed.

"Ya'as, ma'am," Uncle David admitted reluctantly. "Miss Dorothy sent me fo' to tell you dat Mist' Robert had been wounded, and war in de hospital at Strasburg. Mist' Robert am mighty poo'ly," he added.

Mrs. Stuart walked toward the door.

"Where are you going, Mary?" asked her husband.

She stopped and looked back at him.

"I am going to my son," she replied.

"I forbid you to do so," declared Charles Stuart, sternly. "I repudiated him four years ago when he joined the Union army. He ceased to be my son from that hour."

"Yes, you repudiated him," she answered, looking at him as she had never looked at him before. "You cast out your only son. All these years you have never once relented. You would not even permit his name to be spoken in your presence. You must have seen that my heart was breaking, but you were pitiless."

He gazed at her in amazement; his gentle, loving wife was transformed. She was hardly recognizable in the determined woman who looked at him with defiant eyes. "You have repudiated your only son, but he is my child. He is wounded, dying, perhaps. There is nothing in all the wide world that could keep me from him."

She waved Uncle David aside and went out. The old darky turned and followed her.

As the gray dawn was breaking Dorothy and Uncle David left the hospital, leaving Mrs. Stuart beside the cot on which her son lay alive, but still unconscious. She sent no message to her husband. She had no thought for any one save her son, whose life might go out with the rising of the sun.

"I must go home, to my mother," Dorothy had said to her, as the long hours of the dreadful night gave place to the first glimmering of dawn. "She will be very anxious." Mrs. Stuart nodded, without lifting her eyes from the white, still face on the pillow. "Have you any message to send to Mr. Stuart?" asked Dorothy.

"No," was the reply

Dorothy bent over and pressed her lips to Robert's forehead. She believed that she was bidding him farewell forever. She turned and went back to where Carlisle lay with Uncle David sitting beside him.

"I am going home now, Carlisle," she said. "Mother will want me."

"Give her my love, Dorothy," he said. "I suppose Podge had to remain with mother," he continued

Dorothy bowed her head. She could not speak. Uncle David laid a trembling hand on Lieutenant Allan's arm

"Dat boy, Podge, would been heah de fust thing, young massa, ef he could." he murmured.

Carlisle smiled. "Of course he would." he declared. "But Podge is a soldier; he stayed at his post."

"Podge hab done his best," said Uncle David, simply, as he arose to accompany Dorothy.

They did not dare tell Carlisle of Podge's death until he was stronger.

The gray dawn crept into the room where Charles Stuart lay, and mingled grotesquely with the lamplight. All during the long hours of the night he had lain with his eyes turned toward the lights of the town. And during that long vigil the iron will of the man broke His whole soul went out in yearning to the son he had repudiated.

"Oh, God," he prayed, "spare his life! Give him back to me!"

The top of old Massanutten was all aglow with the golden light of the rising sun when Mrs. Stuart came into the room, white and exhausted. As she came toward the couch the eyes of husband and wife met.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Charles Stuart, for he read in his wife's face that her son lived

She understood, and dropping on her knees beside the couch, she laid her head on his breast and wept.

CHAPTER XVI.

AFTERMATH.

After the battle of Fisher's Hill, the Federals moved down the Valley and encamped at Cedar Creek, Sheridan having his headquarters at an old Colonial mansion, Belle Grove, belonging to the Hite family. Several days later the Confederates returned down the Valley and took up their old position on Fisher's Hill.

Lieutenant Allan left the hospital and went home on a two-weeks' furlough. Before leaving the hospital, he went to the cot on which Captain Stuart lay. In silence they clasped hands, looking deep into each other's eyes, with the old love, the old friendship.

Uncle David came alone into the room where Mrs. Allen and Dorothy awaited Carlisle.

"Where is your young master?" asked Mrs. Allan.

"He am out thar at Podge's grave," replied Uncle David. "When I done tole de young massa 'bout Podge, he jest cried like a chile. I done lef' him kneelin' by Podge's grave."

When Carlisle came into the room there was a look of great sorrow upon his face, but he made no reference to Podge. It was several days before he could bring himself to speak of the faithful darky who had died for him.

One day, when his furlough was drawing to a close, Lieutenant Allan went for the first time to Mountainview. He learned, with a feeling of relief, that Christine had been for some time in the North. The best part of his love for her had died the night she tempted him to dishonor on Massanutten, but he did not know what effect her beauty and her charm might still have for him. A year later Christine married a wealthy Bostonian, a man many years her senior. She became known for her beauty, the magnificence of her jewels, her extravagances, and her heartless coquetry.

On the 19th of October the battle of Fisher's Hill was fought, and the Federal's were again victorious. With this battle the campaign in the Valley was ended. The war was over, and once again the beautiful Valley of the Shenandoah smiled in peace and beauty under the shadow of the everlasting hills.

On a lovely evening in June, Marguerite stood upon the porch at Mountainview. She was gowned in white, with pale pink roses twined in her golden curls. She had just returned from Linden, where she had served as bridesmaid at the wedding of Dorothy and Robert Stuart.

The tall, erect form of a man came in at the gate and crossed the lawn in the moonlight. Marguerite's breath quickened; she trembled.

"Colonel Warwick!" she murmured, as he came up the steps to her side.

"Yes, it is I," he replied, with a faint smile. "Child, sweetheart, I have come back to tell you again that I love you. Marguerite, do you care for me just a little? My sweet Southern rose, can I teach you to love me?"

She glanced up at him shyly. "You cannot teach me what I have already learned," she replied.

With a murmured exclamation of great joy, he took her in his arms.

Colonel Warwick experienced little difficulty in obtaining Major Foster's consent to his marriage with Marguerite, but it was some time before Mammy could become reconciled to her "chile's marryin' one ob dem Yankees."

On the white headstone at Podge's grave are engraved these words, "Greater love hath no man than this that he give his life for his friend."

The End

* * *

A Promising Witness.

"Now, Pat," said the prosecuting attorney, "we need your testimony in this automobile case to secure a conviction. You say the defendant was going at a terrific rate of speed. Now, just tell us how fast do you mean by that?"

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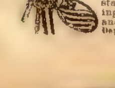
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Santa Claus Binky.

(Continued from page seven.)

was presented with the fairest doll in the bag; the one with the bluest eyes, rosiest cheeks, and goldiest curls

"Goldy wants to kith good Thanty Caus," lisped the little tot. Binky picked her up and kissed her fondly, again and again.

Drowning the mellow tones of the sleigh-bells, the united cheers of Shanty Town rang as Jackson and Binky sped cityward.

At a fairly respectable side-street cottage, Jackson was ordered to halt, and Binky jumped out to make the last delivery. He struggled to the porch with two well-filled bags and knocked loudly on the door.

After a short wait, a thin-featured woman, showing signs of hurried dressing, opened the door timidly. Without a word of explanation Binky thrust the gifts into the room and hurried back to the sleigh, and the journey down town was resumed.

"Yuh kin drop me here," voiced Binky, as they were passing the "Hurry Back."

"Whoa! Good night, Santy."

"Good night, old man," answered Binky, as he cheerfully made for the saloon's rear.

Stealthily he entered, and found the bottle of port he had broached.

"You're first," he said as he was in the act of raising it to his lips. Then a sudden thought was born, and he dashed it to the floor in fragments.

"I'll be durned if I spoil th' taste uh the kidlet's kiss," he exploded. "That kiss was better tastin' than any booze in this dump. I got a hunch tuh reform an' hit th' jail sober fer onct. But first I'm goin' tuh Carrie Nationize this pauper-factory, so here goes."

Presently gurgling, spattering sounds, denoting the liberation of pent-up spirits, pervaded the length and breadth of the "Hurry Back." "If I only had her hatchet!" hummed Binky, merrily, as he opened faucets, drove in bungs, and pulled corks.

A torrent of choice assorted spirits were rushing merrily through the back door ere Binky's destructive mania was sufficiently satiated. Leaping the redolent stream, he regained the street, and went in search of an officer. Before the First National Bank stood Patrolmen O'Geehan.

"I'm through now, so put me intuh th' jug outuh th' cold," demanded Binky.

"Nawthin' doin', Santy, me bye; yer too pop'lar; th' kids 'u'd never stand fer't," bantered the officer. "It's th' wicked fer th' jug."

"Just as you say. Guess I'll go home tuh th' old woman an' kids then, an' git some sleep," yawned Binky

Briskly he walked the half-dozen blocks to the cottage where the last presents were left. Within was a great stir, and at his knock the door flew open immediately.

"It's Santy Claus! It's Santy Claus!" came the delighted shouts of two youngsters as he stepped in and closed the door.

By a few quick movements, Binky divested himself of the Santa mask and raiment

"It's papa! It's papa!" came from the children, in tones of added delight.

After parents and children had spent their first tumultuous joy of reunion, Binky's better half naturally enough wished to know how he was enabled to procure all the food, comforts, and toys scattered on the tables and floor. To this Binky merely replied: "Yuh'll probably know in th' mornin'," and with that she must appear satisfied

"Well, guess I made good. Now it's me fer th' big feed!" chuckled Binky, as he retired a half-hour later. "I guess it's me fer th' big-house too; but what's th' odds? I sure fed th' bunch!"

Binky snored noisily, while the few remaining hours of darkness paraded dreams of well-fed, contented, thankful folk. Continuously they dinned into his ears: "Merry Christmas, Binky! Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!"

No sheriff-Salvation Army, or other jail confederacy, has ever concocted the equal to the smoking turkey banquet to which Binky and his family sat down at exactly twelve o'clock Christmas Day The cranberry sauce was exceptionally rich and well seasoned. Binky's wife was a thorough cook, and she had found abundant material for a capital dinner in the two bags The dinner was a revelation to Binky after his thirty-day trial of jail cookery.

Barely was the meal over when a double knock sounded, and immediately two officers entered.

"You're under arrest," said one, pointing to Binky.

"For what?"

"For wrecking the 'Hurry Back' saloon."

"Is that all? Well, I'm glad I did it. I sure put th' Carrie Nation stamp on that booze-joint."

As Binky kissed his wife good-by he promised: "I'm through with booze now, dearie. When they turn me loose, I'm goin' tuh work fer you an' th' kids. Yuh sure put up a swell dinner today."

Fifteen minutes later Binky was twitting his jailer and jail pals, who were just finishing their turkey dinners

"You fellers think yer feedin'. Well, say, I just stepped up from a banquet that makes this'n look like free-lunch. I had everything you got an' noodle-soup an' chocolate-cake throwed in. An' besides, a bread-an'-water Christmas dinner out uh jail, with th' old lady an' kids, 'u'd taste better'n th' swellest jail feed on tap."

While Binky was talking he toyed with a wishbone on the table. In conclusion he picked up the crotch and held it out to his nearest neighbor.

"Pull, Jimmie," he said.

Well, Binky managed to secure the long end of the wishbone, but nevertheless he resided in jail for many a weary while. A strange thing, however, was that four years later, the department store from which Binky pilfered the Christmas presents, received a check for two hundred dollars from an anonymous source, and a still stranger fact became established—Binky had permanently quit drinking.

* * *

Christmas Jingles.

"Henry," said the bard's wife when he had finished his scanty evening meal of brown bread and molasses; "Henry, I wish you wouldn't read or fall asleep on the couch this evening."

"Why not, my dear?" replied the bard.

"Because I want you to dash off a few little jingles to go with my Christmas presents."

"Nix on the jingle stuff," retorted the bard, who is often compelled to speak plainly, nay even harshly. "Nix on the jingle stuff. I'm tired out."

"That's just what I expected. If Mrs. Watson came in here and asked you to write a jingle for her you'd do it in a hurry; but that's the last thing your wife must ask of you. You'll write jingles and verses for anybody else, but not your wife."

"Oh, well, if you're going to get nasty about it, I suppose I'll have to do it. What do you want?"

"Write a little verse to go with this pickle dish for Mrs. Graham."

In a few minutes the bard produced this:

"To send this pickle dish to you
We hoarded up our nickles;
Pray think of us as friends true blue
Whene'er you pass the pickles."

"Lovely. Just what I wanted," said she. "And now write something to go with this hatpin holder for Florence."

Whereupon this was handed over for approval:

"Put your hatpins here
When you go upstairs.
Don't ruin the backs
Of your mother's chairs."

"Splendid! Splendid! And now a jingle for this apron for Mrs. Waterman."

In a few minutes Henry came through with this

"On your dimity dress
You'll not get a crumb
If you tie this around
Your tummy-tum-tum."

"Oh, Henry," she muttered. "That's awful! But now write something for Mabel's music roll." And this came forthwith:

"Dear Mabel, in this leather roll
If you will only keep
Your music, then the neighbors all—
May get a little sleep."

"I don't like that. It may offend her But write another one for these salt and pepper shakers for Aunt Mary." Which was done as follows:

"Dear auntie, we would send you more
If we were only rich.
One is for pepper, one for salt,
But Lord knows which is which."

"That isn't fair. Anybody with half an eye could tell which is the pepper and which is the salt," retorted the bard's wife. "Now I want one for this silver olive fork for Jennie." This was it:

"Dear Jennie, here's an olive fork
Its prongs are made of gold
I like to use my fingers, but
It's bad form I am told."

"That will do for tonight. Tomorrow night I shall expect you to write as many more."

And yet people wonder why bards go insane.

* * *

Exchange Habit.

The man whose wife invariably buys a necktie for him experienced a pleasant shock Christmas morning. It came in the form of a tie of modest tint and handsome pattern. It was very different from the tie he had been in the habit of receiving.

The man was greatly pleased, but he thought it wise to conceal his satisfaction. He put the tie away in the usual drawer to await a fitting opportunity.

It came a few evenings later. He looked for the neat and modest adornment. It wasn't there.

His wife saw him as he mussed up things.

"Are you hunting for your new tie, dear?" she asked.

"Yes," he abruptly answered.

She laughed.

"I knew it didn't please you, dear," she said, "and so I exchanged it for this."

And she triumphantly held aloft a pale yellow monstrosity with red spots

AGENTS WANTED

$30 WEEKLY Paid to Agents FOR TAKING
Cut-rate Grocery Orders | SUGAR 4c LB.
Everything at CUT PRICES | OUTFIT FREE
Groceries easiest line to sell. Everyone eats. We save your customers the retailers profits. Write at once for territory. STANDARD MERCANTILE CO., Wholesale Grocers, Cleveland, Ohio., Department K.

WE PAY $36 A WEEK AND EXPENSES to men with rigs to introduce poultry compound. Year's contract.
IMPERIAL MFG. CO., Dept. 67, Parsons, Kans.

TOBACCO FACTORY WANTS SALESMEN Good Pay, steady Work and Promotion. Experience unnecessary as we give Complete Instructions Piedmont Tobacco Co., Bx. D 14, Danville, Va.

DON'T ACCEPT an agency until you get my samples and particulars. MONEY MAKERS
Address SAYMAN 804 Sayman Building, St. Louis Mo.

AGENTS Handkerchiefs, Dress Goods. Carleton made $8 one afternoon. Mrs. Bosworth $25 in 2 days **$10 a day** FREE SAMPLES. Credit. Stamp brings particulars.
Freeport Mfg. Co., 52 Main St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

AGENTS PORTRAITS 35c, FRAMES 15c. Sheet Pictures 1c. Stereoscopes 25c. Views 1c. 30 days' credit. *Samples and catalog free.*
Consolidated Portrait Co., Dept. 5016, 1027 W. Adams St. Chicago

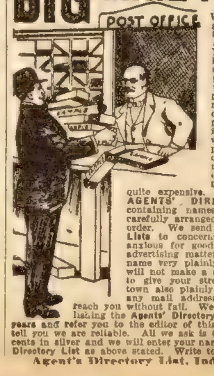
The Awl For All
$1.00 POSTPAID
Myers' Wonderful Sewing Awl
sews leather, canvas, shoes—anything, heavy or light. Complete repair shop in itself. Saves many trips to town. Mends harness, saddles, wagon covers, blankets, buggy tops, belts, etc. Can't get out of order. Original and only awl with diamond point full grooved needle to protect the thread. BIG MONEY FOR AGENTS.
C. A. Myers Co., 6327 Lexington Ave., Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS
Give a $1.50 4-qt. Aluminum Kettle free with every sale to introduce new goods. Every woman wants aluminum. Big money. Sells like wildfire. Sworn proof of $7.70 profit in 3 hours. Write quick for agency and free samples to workers.
THOMAS ALUMINUM CO.
6717 Home St. Dayton, Ohio

JUDY'S CLAMP
JUDY'S AWL
AGENTS—Make $30 per Week
This AWL sews a lock stitch like a machine Best thing ever made for repairing Harness, Shoes, etc. A dozen exclusive features. Demand is immense. Sales astounding. Roy Sage writes "Rec'd Awl, sold 6 in 15 min." L. Perrine says "Sold 9 on way home with sample" Low price, big profit, great value, quick sales Drop everything write for sample and instructions
W. S. JUDY, Mgr. Dept. 1442 DAYTON, OHIO

Beacon Burner FREE
FITS YOUR OLD LAMP.
100 Candle Power Incandescent pure white light from (kerosene) coal oil. Beats either gas or electricity.
COSTS ONLY 1 CENT FOR 6 HOURS
We want one person in each locality to whom we can refer new customers. Take advantage of our Special Offer to secure a Beacon Burner FREE. Write today. AGENTS WANTED.
HOME SUPPLY CO., 54 Home Bldg., Kansas City, Mo

MONEY MAKING AGENTS OUTFIT FREE
No matter who you are, what you are doing, or, what you have done before—get busy. This proposition will take your breath away—get you to figuring—show you a big, hot, sizzling, right off the bat, winner. We want agents' all or spare time to take charge of territory. Bazin, Mass. "Made $400. in a few weeks." Beers, Pa. "Cleared $60. the first week." McKay, Miss. writes, "I have never seen anything to beat it." Booth, Fla. "Wish I had found it years ago," and so it goes. Can't do the proposition justice here. Big repeater, big profits and big season now. Sample Case and Agents' Outfit Free. Enormous demand. Quick sales. 100 per cent profits. No experience necessary. New field, new business, that's why it's easy. Territory is going fast Start while it's new. Don't delay—just a postal today.
UNIVERSAL IMPORT CO.
3580 Sycamore St.
CINCINNATI, O.



BIG MAIL FREE!
Would you like to get a lot of letters, circulars and packages? You probably know that manufacturers, supply houses, wholesalers and publishers buy names and addresses for the purpose of sending samples, advertising matter, papers and circulars to Good names and addresses are hard to get and are quite expensive. We publish an AGENTS' DIRECTORY LIST containing names and addresses carefully arranged in alphabetical order. We send these Directory Lists to concerns we know are anxious for good names to send advertising matter to. Write your name very plainly so the printer will not make a mistake; be sure to give your street number and town also plainly written so that any mail addressed to you will reach you without fail. We have been publishing the Agents' Directory List for several years and refer you to the editor of this paper who will tell you we are reliable. All we ask is that you send 10 cents in silver and we will enter your name in our Agents' Directory List as above stated. Write today. Address
Agent's Directory List, Indiana, Pa.

Chicago Ledger

Entered as second-class matter June 25, 1885, at the postoffice at Chicago, Illinois, under act of March 3, 1879

Published Every Saturday
By W. D. BOYCE CO., CHICAGO, ILL.
500 Dearborn Avenue.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

Single subscriptions to The Chicago Ledger by mail $1.00 a year, 50 cents for six months, in advance. Remittances should be made by Bank Draft, Registered Letter, Postoffice or Express money Order, payable to The Chicago Ledger. Subscription price in Canada $1 50 a year. We do not send receipts for money paid on subscriptions; the address tab on your paper shows the date to which your subscription is paid.

BACK NUMBERS.

Back numbers of the Ledger can be had by addressing this office. Always give the numbers desired, plainly written, accompanied by your full address, and your order will receive prompt attention. Price 5 cents per copy.

BEWARE OF STRANGERS.

The Ledger employs no traveling agents to solicit subscriptions, and every person working in that capacity is a fraud. No person is authorized to take subscriptions for the Ledger unless he or she be well known in the city or village where they have been appointed agents to sell this paper every week. A liberal reward will be paid for evidence that will enable us to arrest and convict such persons as are now traveling from town to town in different sections of this country, claiming to be agents of the Ledger and thereby defrauding the people. Beware of strangers.

ADVERTISING.

Advertising rate $2 25 per Agate Line, per insertion for advertisements in the The Chicago Ledger and The Saturday Blade combined. These two weeklies have an average circulation of

1,000,000

COPIES WEEKLY.

GENTLE JABS.

May the Christmas tree never suffer from a frost!

With a lot of people it's a long time between thinks.

It is well to aim high, but be sure your gun is loaded.

Herewith sounds the last call to buy them at any old hour.

Never put off till tomorrow the favor you can do us today.

The man who sings his own praise seldom gets an encore.

If a man is too lazy to kick, his wife insists that he is patient.

Just before Christmas a word to the wise isn't always sufficient.

A man never forgives his enemies until he wishes them prosperity.

Poor old dad! Will it be a pair of carpet slippers for him, as usual?

If a man has anything he can't give away he proceeds to raffle it off.

The mantle of charity is not synonymous with the cloak of friendship.

Santa Claus could, in return, have any public office that he might chose.

Will future ages learn how to do the Christmas shopping by machinery?

Cut out the worry about yesterday's sorrows and get busy with the joys of today.

At this season the merry weather forecaster can predict snow flurries without a tremor.

Money may not bring happiness, but every man on earth would like to try the experiment for himself.

Job was a patient man, but he never found the cat asleep on the piano just after he had varnished it.

Now that we have denatured football is there no way to modify and humanize eleventh-hour Christmas shopping?

The Christmas problem with some people is how to make the presents they received last year do for others this year.

If you are unable to plant a few flowers along the path of life you might at least pause long enough to pull a few weeds.

Some people are already telling what they would do if they had a million dollars—but they wouldn't do anything of the kind.

No first aid is required for the injured feelings of the pretty girls who are kissed by the right young men under the mistletoe.

WANT ADS

Want and Classified Advertising not less than 14 words accepted for insertion in the Ledger and Blade at 25 cents per word.

AUTOMOBILES

AUTOMOBILE Owners—We want you on our mailing list to show how we can cut down your up-keep. Example: Ford "T" radiators at $18.00, Model N-R-S radiators at $23 00. Everything at correspondingly low prices. Autoparts Mfng Co., Detroit, Mich.

AGENTS WANTED

AGENTS—Make $2.00 each selling our wonderful Luminous Crucifixes; nothing to sell six a day; absolutely new; shine all night in darkest room. Pioneer Portrait Co., 1258 West [illegible] street, Chicago.

AGENTS—Would You Take a Steady Job starting right away, earning $30 a week with chance of promotion to position of district manager at three thousand dollars yearly. No experience required. My line is snappy, self-sellers that make and hold customers. Need seventy-five more salesmen. If you want to make big money quick, write me today. E. M. Davis, 1016 Davis Block, Chicago.

FREE Pillows with every order. Great proposition. Fine goods. Mail us $10 and we send you new 36-lb. feather bed and give you 6-lb. pair pillows Free. New feathers. Best ticking. Freight prepaid on all. Satisfaction guaranteed. Fine chance for agents. Turner & Cornwell, Dep't G, Charlotte, N. C. Reference, Commercial National Bank.

FREE—"Investing For Profit" Magazine. Send me your name and I will mail you this magazine absolutely free. Before you invest a dollar anywhere get this magazine—it is worth $10 a copy to any man who intends to invest $5 or more per month. Tells you how $1,000 can grow to $22,000—how to judge different classes of investments, the real earning power of your money. This magazine six months free, if you write today. H. L. Barber, Publisher, 453, 28 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago.

$250.00 paid for distributing 2,000 free packages Perfumed Soap Powder in your town. Men or women. No money required. B. W. Ward & Co., 1770 Perteau ave., Chicago.

AGENTS Sell Rich Looking Imported 36x68 rugs at $1 each. Carter, Tenn., sold 115 in four days, his profit $57. You can do as well. Write for territory, sample offer and selling plan. Condon, Importer, Stonington, Maine.

AGENTS—Make $25 to $100 every week selling sign letters for stores and offices. Success guaranteed. Samples and particulars free. Metallic Sign Co., 416 N. Clark, Chicago.

I HAVE some dandy new articles for home manufacture. All big profit payers. Particulars free. A. Benson, Stewartville, Minn.

HAVE You a Few Hours to Spare? We Want man or woman in each town. No capital needed. An hour's work shows dollars earned in spare time. Pocket sample. 400% profit. G. C. Mfg. Co., 20 Warren St., New York.

AGENTS—Our Guaranteed Hosiery sells on sight. Repeat orders follow quick. Clarknit Hose wears longest. Good Commissions, quick deliveries. Clark Mfg. Co., Germantown, Philadelphia, Pa.

WANTED — Representatives — $30 to $60 weekly. Experience unnecessary. Territory free. Write Standard Safety Lamp Co., 157 W. Randolph, Chicago.

A FORTUNE For Agents—Something new. Universal necessity. Immense profits. Quick returns. Write today. Free literature. Dep't A, General Utilities Sales Agency, 1936 Lincoln Ave., Chicago.

WILL start you in the mail order business free, if you handle our goods. Crest and Co., Atlantic City, N. J.

PERFECTION Pocket Adding Machine—Lightning seller; agents wanted. Cincinnati Specialty Mfg. Co., Dep't M, Cincinnati, Ohio.

$7 MADE daily selling 25c household necessity costing 6c. 125,000 sold here and many more in country towns. Two samples for 5c Domestic Mfg Co., 519 B, Wash. No., Minneapolis, Minn.

PORTRAITS, Medallions, Photo Pillow Tops, photo china plates, frames, sheet pictures, etc., at prices below the lowest; guaranteed; rejects credited; prompt shipments; 30 day's credit; catalogue and samples Free. Jas. C. Bailey, Desk T 3, Chicago.

REAL ESTATE

FRUIT LANDS.—To close an estate I am authorized to offer en bloc at a sacrifice, 2 4-acre Tracts, 11 5-acre Tracts and one 25-acre Tract improved with dwelling, stable, ice house etc., in South East Kootenay, British Columbia, overlooking the City of Cranbrook, the nearest fruit lands to the great Prairies of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Splendid home market, and high prices for all kinds of vegetables, owing to the lumber and mining industries in the district. Government roads, exceptionally low taxes, pure water and grand climate. Here is a rare chance to move right onto an improved fruit farm and gain a whole season's time, as part of land has been cultivated and buildings erected thereon. Write me at once if you are in a position to take advantage of a bargain on easy terms. J. F. Corrigan, 209 East Ontario St., Chicago, Ill

POULTRY AND PET STOCK

KELLERSTRASS White Orpington Cockerels, $2.50 each. Robert C. Boss, Route 9, La Porte, Ind

HELP WANTED

ENTER the Merchant Tailoring Business for yourself. Learn to cut men's clothes by our easy system. Big profits—no investment. Full particulars free. Write today. Success School of Cutting, Dep't 14, Jackson, Mich.

SONG Poems or Music. Write for free publishing plan. J. E. Minnick Co., Inc., 1611 7th, Wash., D. C.

MEN and Women Wanted for Government Positions. $90.00 month. Annual vacations. Short hours. No "layoffs." Common education sufficient. Over 12,000 appointments coming. Influence unnecessary. Farmers eligible. Send postal immediately for free list of positions open. Franklin Institute, Dep't H 30, Rochester, N. Y.

SONG Poems Wanted. New Plan. Big Money Free Book. Hayworth Music Co., 655 G, Wash., D. C.

YOUR Services Wanted. Send stamped self-addressed envelope. Mailing House 17, Delavan, Wis.

WANTED—A man or woman, all or spare time, to secure information for us. Work at home or travel. Experience not necessary. Nothing to sell. Good Pay. Send stamp for particulars. Address M. S. I. A., 505 L Building, Indianapolis, Indiana

EARN your way thru College. Don't pay cash. Send 2c stamp for information. Logan Square College, 2326 Milwaukee Ave., Chicago.

WE PAY 15c each for names of Poultry Raisers. Outfit 10c. Manager, 1427 E 32, Cleveland, Ohio

MALE HELP WANTED

GOVERNMENT Farmers Wanted—$60 to $75 monthly. Free Living Quarters. Write Ozment 68 F., St. Louis.

I WILL Start You earning $4 daily at home in spare time, silvering mirrors; no capital; free instructive booklet, giving plans of operation. G. F. Redmond, Dep't 400, Boston, Mass.

$50.00 TO $100.00 A MONTH For your spare time——Experience not needed. Want active man each locality. Benefits for sickness, injury, death. Write [illegible] 766, Covington, Ky

LEARN to write advertisements—Earn $25 to $100 weekly. We can positively show you by mail how to increase your salary. Prospectus free. Page-Davis Co., Dept 77, Page Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

FREE Illustrated Book tells about over 360,000 protected positions in U. S. service. More than 40,000 vacancies every year. There is a big chance here for you, sure and generous pay, lifetime employment. Easy to get. Just ask for booklet A-1034. No obligation. Earl Hopkins, Washington, D. C.

LOCAL Representative Wanted. No canvassing or soliciting required. Good income assured. Address National Co-Operative Realty Co., V-1514 Marden Building, Washington, D. C.

GET prepared for Government Examinations by former United States Civil Service Secretary-Examiner. No "Free Preparation" or "Positions Guaranteed" schemes. Straight proposition. "Real Courses." Booklet without obligation. Arthur Robert Patterson, Rochester, N. Y.

FEMALE HELP WANTED

MAKE a comfortable living at home sewing plain seams. Any ordinary sewing machine. All home work. No canvassing. Steady. Sewers wanted in each town. No triflers reply. State how much time can sew. Send ten cents for postage, samples, etc. Returned if not satisfactory. Home Sewers Company, New York Jobbers Sewing, "BL" Dep't, Reho[illegible]

I WANT 10 women demonstrators. Good Pay, Steady Work and Promotion. Address Mr. B., % The D. S. Co., Kalamazoo, Mich

WOULD you wear a pair of our famous Cushion Sole Shoes for ladies if we sent them absolutely free? No canvassing. Write today. Greeley Shoe Company, 10 Hamilton Place, Boston, Mass

LADIES can make shields at home; $10 per 100; work sent prepaid to reliable women. Particulars for stamped addressed envelope. Eureka Co., Dep't 17, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

INSTRUCTION

AMERICA'S Finest Penman teaches rapid, tireless, business writing by mail. Your name on card and journal Free. Francis B. Courtney, Box E 492, Detroit, Mich.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

$30 GROWS to $400. Learn how to make your money grow, by dropping postal asking for "full information." W. E. N., Box 536, Syracuse, N. Y

BOYS AND GIRLS

GUARANTEED Watch or gold plated bracelet free to boys and girls for placing sample packets Seeds with friends. P. People's Co., P-61, York Haven, Pa.

POST CARDS

5 BEAUTIFUL Holiday Post Cards Free, with every 25c order. 30 High grade cards for 25c. F. Brandt, 3050 Perry Ave., New York

MUSICAL

SHEET Music—Send 50 cents for sample copies of the most beautiful Marches, Waltzes and Two-Steps ever written. Groff Musical Co., 2828 Madison St., Chicago, Ill.

SONG Poems Wanted—Publication secured. Satisfaction guaranteed. D. E. Stoeckel, Mus. Bac., East Alton, Ill.

PATENTS

THE PATENTOME is interesting and instructive. A liberal education in patents and how to get them. Free on request. Established 1865 Anderson and Son, Patent Solicitors, 713 G St., Washington, D. C

SPECTACLES AND EYEGLASSES

OUR New Dollar Spectacles and Eye Glasses are guaranteed to fit your eyes or your dollar returned. Send your age and $1 with 4c postage. Fredrick & Co., Dep't BL, Toledo, Ohio.

HEALTH AND MEDICAL

DRINK HABIT—Guaranteed home treatment three days—lifelong result. The only reliable. Book mailed free. Edw. J. Woods, 531 Sixth avenue, M 356, New York, N. Y.

TOBACCO Habit. How to overcome it quickly, easily, lastingly. Book free. Edw. J. Woods, 534 Sixth Ave., 171 A, New York City

MISCELLANEOUS

50 BEAUTY Secrets, package Turkish perfume, package Postals, all for dime. Wesley Co., Aurora, Ills.

BROTHER accidentally discovered root will cure both tobacco habit and indigestion; gladly send particulars. R. O. Stokes, Mohawk, Florida.

INTERESTING books and den photos. 50 photos, 10c. Cat. free. Gem 2 Co., Ypsilanti, Mich.

$3.00 Flexible Bible, $1.50. Old and New Testament. Self pronouncing text, 4,000 questions and answers, 31 beautiful illustrations, 12 maps of Bible lands in colors. Money cheerfully refunded if not entirely satisfactory. Walter F. Brophy, 30 North Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.

MILLION Christmas catalogues free, Write. German American Supply Company, Times Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

CONCEALED Beauties revealed, Twelve, 10c. "Alice," illustrated, 10c. Both 15c. Ord, Long Beach, Calif

LEGAL Advice and Bookkeeping—five cent stamp. 74 Home Bank Building, Detroit, Michigan.

$40.00 Edisons, $9.50. $35 records, $[illegible]. $65 doubles, $.40. Retiring. Knights, 201 Twelfth, St. Louis, Mo.

PERSONAL

MARRY—Many rich, congenial and anxious for companions. Interesting. Particulars and photos free. The Messenger, Jacksonville, Fla.

MARRIAGE paper, largest published, with photos pretty girls, mailed free. Ideals, St. Paul, Minn

MARRY Rich—Matrimonial paper of highest character, containing hundreds of photos and descriptions of marriageable people with means; mailed free, sealed; either sex. Write. One may be your ideal. Standard Cor. Club, Box 607, Grays Lake, Illinois.

MARRY—Photos, descriptions and P. O. addresses of pretty, rich ladies and gents, want to marry, free. H. Jahn, St. Paul, Minn.

MARRIAGE Paper Free; best published for sure results; reliable. Eastern Agency, 55, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

FULL Life reading. Send dime, birth date. Prof. Le Vern, 2703 Jackson Boul., Chicago.

FUTURE told, also past. Send 10c and birthdate. Prof. Edwards, 2854 West Madison St., Chicago.

MARRY wealth and beauty. Marriage Directory Free. Pay when married. New plan. Ladies send description in first letter Box 314 E, Kansas City, Mo.

MARRY—Many rich, anxious for early marriage; descriptions free; sealed; pay if suited. New System, Box 525 F, Kansas City, Mo.

MARRY—Catalogue with photos and descriptions Free. Pay if suited. Select Club. Dep't 674, Tekonsha, Mich

MARRY, thousands wealthy, anxious for early marriage, descriptions free. Confidential 268 Market St., San Francisco, Calif

LOVINE never fails. Every package guaranteed. Either sex. 10c. Two packages sealed, 20c. Union, Box 100N, Palatine, Illinois

FREE Reading by trance medium. Send date of birth—dime. Le Roy Pub. Co., Saginaw, Michigan

MARRIAGE Paper—Highest Character; Incorporated; 16th year; 8,000 members; paper sealed; send 10c. B. W. Love, Box 1600, Denver, Colo

MARRY—Thousands tired living alone, all parts United States, many rich. (Selections 10c). Mrs. Hyde, 2676 Mission, San Francisco, Calif

Her Plan.

Here is a little scheme which a wife tried on a good—but rather tight—husband when she wanted a particular something for Christmas, which is commended to wives of a like mind. One night when he was comfortably seated after dinner smoking his pipe, she brought out a bundle of papers and said she had hesitated for a long time whether or not to read him some letters she had received. He pricked up his ears, seemed interested and she took the rubber band from the package, telling him he must promise not to ask who the writer was until she had finished, and then not to go gunning for her correspondent. He promised, with curiosity at boiling point, and she began to read:

"My own darling," she began, "I think of you all day and dream of you by night. Wherever I go you are with me, and I live for you alone. The other night when I discovered that you loved me—" at this point husband's pipe went out and he sat up exceedingly straight.

"What?" he said, rising with a red face. "who the——"

"Now," said his wife, "you promised to wait until the end, to be quiet until I had finished."

"But——" said her husband.

She continued to read. "Your eyes are my sun, your mouth is the mouth of my dreams, your lips——"

"Well, I'll be——" said her husband, furiously.

"I dream of a day when you'll be mine and mine alone," read on his wife calmly, "and I long for the day when I can call you——"

"Stop that!" shrieked the irate husband. "Who wrote that rot? Just let me get my hands on him——"

"You've got your hands on him now, dear," said his wife, sweetly. "You wrote these letters when we were engaged." He sat down and lighted his pipe.

"What did you say you wanted for Christmas?" he asked.

Parcels Post Jobs Open.

Thousands of appointments coming. Write Franklin Institute, Dep't J 77, Rochester, N. Y., for free list of government positions open to you.
—Advertisement

* * *

FREE ASTHMA CURE.

D. J. Lane, a chemist at 115 Lane Bldg., St. Marys, Kansas, manufactures a remedy for asthma, in which he has so much confidence that he sends a $1 bottle by express to any one who will write him for it. His offer is that he is to be paid for it if it cures, and the one taking the treatment is to be the judge.

* * *

LADIES, PRESERVE YOUR YOUTHFUL APPEARANCE.

Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years, and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results. Send us ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 491, Blairsville, Pa.

PROOF.

Oh, I went to talk with Susan
Just the other eve, you know;
And I sat three hours with her
In the firelight's pleasant glow;
Oft did Susan smile upon me—
And the rule can never fail
That the female of the species
Is more lovely than the male.

Susan begged and asked and coaxed me,
And with disapproving eyes
Marked my strong disinclination,
While I learned to my surprise—
She had asked me to escort her
To a Christmas bargain sale—
That the female of the species
Is more daring than the male

So I went with little Susan
All to buy a gift or two.
Now I'm torn and punched and battered
And I'm also black and blue.
Yes, I quite agree with Rudyard
As I sit at home and wail,
That the female of the species
Is more deadly than the male!

* * *

Their Presents.

A mild-mannered old gentleman, with his placid-faced wife, stood at one of the counters in a large city store, making selections of Christmas gifts—a labor that, in spite of all its little perplexities, was evidently to them a labor of love.

"Have you decided what you're going to get for Mary, ma?" asked the man.

"No, I haven't Dan'l," was the reply. She needs a new set of smoothing irons, and she'd like a nice photograph album, but which to get I don't know."

"We haven't got anything for Hattie's children yet, have we?"

"I've bought a little tin engine and cars for Sammy that'll tickle him most to pieces, and a doll for Sally pretty enough to throw her into fits, but I haven't got a thing yet for the baby."

"He's so little, ma, we don't hardly need to get anything for him."

"I don't care how little he is, he shall have a present—bless his little heart! His old grandma won't forget him."

"Ive got a red silk handkerchief for Cy."

"That'll just suit him. He's great on finery. I must find a necktie to match. We'd better get Lyddy and Hetty something, hadn't we?"

"Yes, a pair of gloves would do, I think."

"And don't forget the candy roosters for George's little boys. They've been talking about 'em for a month back."

"No, you may depend I won't forget them, and I want to be sure and buy some little trinkets for poor Nancy Taft's children."

"Oh, I'm glad you spoke of them. We must take them something, sure. It isn't much of a Christmas they'll have, with their father just buried and all the bills poor Nancy has to pay and nothing to pay them with. I've a good mind to buy Mattie a dress."

"She'd be glad to get it I haven't a doubt."

And so they went from counter to counter with the true Christmas spirit in their hearts and shining from their faces.

* * *

No "Merry Christmas."

Just as Mamie and I were beginning to drive the matrimonial car without skidding, along comes Christmas. Now I'm for Christmas, first, last and all the time. It's the season of good cheer, and would be still if Mamie wasn't so unreasonable at times.

"We'll spend Christmas Day with my folks," said she.

"Not all day," said I. "I want to be with my people part of the time."

Then the horses were off. A proposition to spend Christmas morning with her people and the afternoon and evening with my people was rejected scornfully. The reverse of the plan, was likewise tossed aside as not worthy of consideration.

"We've always made a good deal of Christmas," said I during one of the discussions.

"You haven't made any more of it than we have," Mamie retorted.

"But, my dear——"

"Don't 'but, my dear' me. There's no 'but my dear' about it. I've accepted an invitation to spend the day at home, and we're going to. We can spend some other day with your people."

"Memorial Day or Fourth of July?" I suggested sarcastically

I felt then that I had Mamie wavering, but before I could follow up my argument she called me a "mean old thing." and burst into tears

Now I can answer argument with argument; for every slap she takes at my side of the family I can give back a wallop at her side; I don't think any more of her cousins than she thinks of mine; she's got nothing on me when it comes to picking flaws with the table manners of family ties. But when she bursts into tears she gets my goat.

When a discussion reaches the sob stage I can't reply. Words fail me and I can't sob back worth a cent. As a sigher and a sobber I am a dismal failure. And when it comes to tear shedding I'm as dry as Justice Jefferies would have a high-toned hotel on Sunday.

So I now write myself down as having lost the first Christmas argument. We shall spend December 25th with her folks. Its useless now to wish me a merry Christmas.

My Strange Christmas Journey.

(Continued from page three.)

girl, she must be humored, though that wasn't saying but that in the end I meant to have my way.

"I am afraid that you will find the deep snow very bad for your foot," I said, meekly, sliding her down into it, at the same time, as though I were the mildest of skim-milk chaps.

I was sure she would feel very sorry that she had been so cross, if I didn't oppose her, and, bless her little heart, she did. The snow came halfway to her waist, and it went against me to drop her into it—and that poor little foot, too! It had to be done, though, so I set my lips and did it.

"There is a log over there," I said, humbly, as soon as she could feel that she was fairly away from me. "If you would let me assist you on to that for a moment, until your lady friend could come and help you."

I couldn't but feel what a sly old fox I was to bring in her "lady friend." It made it seem so orthodox and matter-of-fact, that, taken in connection with the poor aching foot, and the wretched cold snow, her rigid bearing began to melt.

"Do let me assist you onto that log." I repeated mildly, and then, taking no answer for a favorable one, I lifted her as near on the tips of my fingers as I could manage, and went floundering through the snow to the long black log I had pointed out

Some one was there before us. How very surprising! "There you are!" I said, putting the girl down, high and dry on the log and moving back from her as though I had no thought of anything but mechanical politeness in the matter.

Who could that be sitting so stiff and silent on the farther end of the log? If it was one of our party, why didn't he speak?

"Hello, there!" I called, going up behind him and shaking him by the shoulder to rouse him

The next moment I was tumbling backward, plowing up the snow at every lunge I made. What had come to me? My brain seemed to turn a complete handspring and light wrong side up.

"I thought you were dead!" I cried, excitedly; for there, about as slimsy as when I had shot him through the window, all covered with snow, hat gone, and with his mouth still open, sat the seedsman, whom I had fancied still sticking legs up, in the bank of snow from which I had just struggled.

My words seemed a painful shock to him. Perhaps he had thought he was dead, and had found it hard to begin all over again. Debts, maybe, cross wife, and all that, who could tell what the poor fellow may have thought he had left behind him?

"What happened?" he asked bitterly "I was looking at beets, and the next thing I knew I was crawling on my hands and knees through a tunnel with my chest full of snow."

I wasn't afraid of him any more. He hadn't been dead then? It was such a relief that I burst out laughing, and hit him a rousing blow on the back, at which he set up an angry cry

"You have shaken the snow farther down," he shivered and then set to work, like a mournful monomaniac, digging and digging at the collar of his coat

Dear me, how unfortunate I was with the poor fellow! Well, the only thing to be done was to bear up cheerfully under our troubles.

"Never mind about the snow, my dear, sir," I cried, jocosely. "You'll melt it soon enough," and I laughed loudly; but the poor wretch hadn't the spirit to join in with me.

And now the black objects, which seemed running about like four-legged beasts in the snow behind us, rose as if were, on their hind legs and ran towards us

I still wonder how a person of her size, so near to strangulation as the fat woman seemed to be as she staggered against me and then dropped, managed to get out of the snow bank alive. As near as I could make out, she was filled with snow as far down as her waist, and all her breathing was internal—merely convulsions going on above her collar.

By some miracle she had kept on her bonnet, and even while I shook her hand and slapped her upon the back, never once did she lose her grip upon it. I have always thought my severe shaking was the means of saving her life, but it never softened her one jot in her bearing toward me.

This capital story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these colmuns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you if you send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

The Vanished Captain.

(Continued from page nine.)

Captain get that letter? How did it come? By mail, most likely, and some time ago, too, because they'd give him some time to come up with the goods. But the Captain's boozy—been on a tear for some time. He don't worry about letters; not he. All he wants is whisky. Now, what has he got as they wants, for he HAS got something for certain. The letter says as he's sinned; that he's still sinning; that he's obstinate; that he's got to suffer. Course, it might be the boozing, but it ain't. Now, then! now then!"

Mr. Bibbs rapped the ashes from his pipe vigorously, and immediately refilled it. He indulged in several short turns up and down the room, then resumed his seat.

"It's the East—the East," he mumbled. "The whole thing smacks of it—Peter and his white-coated gents; the Judge and crowd, with their talk of processions and chaps in white robes and lead as goes through 'em—oh, it's the East all right. The nephew says as his uncle spent seven years out there as naval-aid-de-camp to the Viceroy. That's some years after he gets back from the Crimea after getting that wound in his head and his hands frostbitten—well, of course, of course——" Again the little man arose and walk'ed briskly back and forth. He had removed his shoes and his steps were noiseless. In the distance Reeves church clock sounded the hour of four.

The rope ladder that had been discovered hanging from the roof had been brought inside, and Mr. Bibbs again turned his attention to that. Apparently his inspection gave him little information, for he turned from it, with an exclamation of deep disgust. "Better follow right along slowly and not try for any short cuts," he advised himself. "So he's got something, and so long as he won't give it up, they come for it—and HIM. Got him, too, but how about IT? They take him along in a hurry; quietly, too, for Peter hears no racket, nor the nephew—but then, he's down stairs with the Judge 'bout that time—aye, aye, that's so. If they'd got IT, they wouldn't have bothered to take HIM, would they now; that's sound. Then IT is here and the Captain ain't. They'll try to make the Captain spit out where it is, so—" Again the detective fell to a wordless reasoning. Then presently he commenced to mumble again: "So the kidnaping's all done inside of four, maybe five minutes. All right. Well, it don't stand to reason as a man like the Captain—a big one, with some kind of a temper—would go quietly—not unless he couldn't help it. How did they make him go quietly, then? To get him and hoist him up through that hole," and Mr Bibbs allowed his eyes to rest for a moment on the closed trapdoor, "well, well, now, now——"

The little man's face puckered itself up until it was a mass of seams and creases and so remained for a full half-hour, until presently from out of this puzzled surface emerged the smiling, happy countenance of the usual Mr. Bibbs.

"Of course, of course, it's the same old game, I reckon. A wave of the hand and a look of the eye," he continued. "That—well, that would account for a good many odd things as has happened. I ought to have thought of that long before—me, with my nine years at Quetta—why, I've seen it done dozens of time. Oh, it's East all right; the whole thing stinks of it like the country does of garlic and spices. But why did they get downstairs and why did they assault the Judge's lass? Ah, ah, ah!" Mr. Bibbs' mouth dropped, and then the lips set firmly again "It must be—it MUST be," he growled. "Not up here? Why I thought it was," he continued, arguing in decided manner with himself. That whisky smell—well, that—that, and the slippers—the slippers! Ah, now it's coming out, but by Gad, by God—well, well!" Again he appeared to be stopped but soon he resumed his muttering: "Now, they can't have got it, because they have the Captain; it's safe to assume as it's lying around here, then; somewhere right close. The trail led over the river to the trees, and the dog is scared to death—well, well, natural enough, natural enough. They ought to come then, they ought to come; this here chasing of them is all damn nonsense" With which final deduction, the detective appeared to be satisfied, for he again knocked the ashes from his bowl, and then flung himself upon the bed.

Ten minutes later and Mr. Bibbs appeared to be fast asleep.

The conclusion of this highly interesting story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. Read it. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year.

* * *

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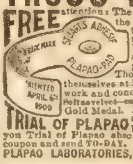

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Our Boys' Corner

Sandy of Catoctin

Or, Battling With Braddock

By Captain Jack Judson

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CHAPTER I

THE YOUNG RECRUIT.

IT WAS the loveliest of mid-spring days when General Braddock, the officer whom King George had sent across the sea to drive the French out of North America, said rather haughtily to Colonel George Washington:

"I would like to see this boy of whom you have spoken. If he is still in the camp, have the goodness to present him to me."

Washington saluted and went away. Presently he returned, accompanied by a well-built, good-looking youth of seventeen, whom he led forward and formally presented to the English general

General Braddock looked the boy over from head to foot.

"What is your name, sir?" he demanded, in his harsh voice.

"Sandy Gaver."

"Where you you live?"

"I live on the Catoctin Mountain."

"Where is that?"

The boy turned halfway around with a smile.

"You can see it from here," said he, pointing to the west. "It is that range yonder. Beyond it lies one of the most beautiful valleys under the sun."

"We are not discussing nature just now," was Braddock's reply. "I fancy we will see that valley erelong. What is your occupation?"

"My father is a farmer, sir," answered the youth, with a feeling of pride. "I am used to the woods, though," he added. "I can handle a rifle fairly well, and I would like to serve under Colonel Washington."

The young Virginia colonel here broke in.

"I shall be pleased to take Master Gaver," he said. "I like his looks and——"

"He does bear himself well," interrupted Braddock, who was slow to bestow compliments. "If his father will consent, he shall march with us."

"Father is perfectly willing that I shall go," Sandy said, with a bow. "I asked him last night."

General Braddock waved his hand "Take the boy, Colonel," said he. "I trust this young backwoodsman will give a good account of himself."

Thereupon Braddock retired within his quarters, and Sandy Gaver went off with Washington.

"Colonel Washington," he ventured, when they were some distance from Braddock's quarters, "I must say that I don't like General Braddock very much."

A smile dawned upon Washington's handsome face.

"You must keep your opinions to yourself, boy," he answered. "General Braddock is in command of this army."

"I beg your pardon, and thank you for what you have said. I shall remain loyal to General Braddock, and fight with him to the very last. I shall go home now and get my rifle, for I prefer to carry it, because I am familiar with its use."

"That is right. Since you know how to use it, it is the very weapon you should carry."

The British army, on its way to the forests of the Monongahela, was encamped at Frederick, Maryland, waiting for Benjamin Franklin to gather up the teams he had promised to secure. It was a fine army for the times, consisting of thousands of scarlet-coated soldiers who had won fame on more than one battlefield. Moreover, Colonel Washington had joined it with his Virginian riflemen, who knew how to fight the Indians, but these brave men were despised by Braddock, who thought there were no fighters in all the world but the King's soldiers.

The shadows of night were stealing over mountain and valley when Sandy Gaver, equipped for the fray, reappeared in the British camp. He was neatly clad in homespun, with a well-made coonskin cap on his head and with fringes on his leggings. He carried a long-barreled rifle in the hollow of his sturdy arm, and his powder-horn and bullet-pouch swung at his side.

"Who are you going to fight, sirree?" cried out a British soldier as he caught sight of the youth upon whom he bestowed a sneering look. "I fancy we shall have no fighting of our own since you have reinforced the army."

"I am going to fight for the King against the French and Indians."

"And annihilate the whole lot, no doubt?"

"I shall do my best," replied Sandy, as color mounted to his cheeks. "I don't think General Braddock will ever have cause to be ashamed of Sandy Gaver."

The soldier laughed at this, and called attention to the boy as he marched off.

"He won't fight," sneered one of the redcoats. "We won't have him with us long. His mother's apronstrings will call him back before we are across yon mountain."

"All I can say is that the first Indian will frighten him home, and he won't stop running till he is safe in the old nest."

As Sandy had no especial place assigned him, he strolled down the main street of the town and entered the tavern where he was confronted by a lot of soldiers. These lusty fellows were drinking and boasting how they were going to put the enemy to flight. The boy modestly sought a corner of the room and looked on.

"Ho! here we've got a new recruit," bellowed a big fellow, as his roving eyes fell upon Sandy. "I say, comrades, there's no use of our marching any further. Send that young jackanapes ahead, and he'll sweep the French from our path."

All eyes were thus drawn to the boy, who flushed with indignation.

"Come out here and toe the mark," bawled the redcoat. "Let us see our young Samson."

Some one caught Sandy by the arm and pushed him forward

"What can you hit with that toy gun?" cried another

"Why, it won't draw blood!" exclaimed a third.

Sandy was bombarded from all sides.

"We'll wait and see," he said, facing the fun makers. "Perhaps the time is coming when you will have a better opinion of my rifle."

"Ho! ho!" laughed all in chorus. "A better opinion of that popgun? Yes, we'll wait and see."

Just then the front door opened, and into the room strode a man who from the first commanded attention. Sandy gritted his teeth the moment his gaze fell upon him.

"I wonder if Ross Gilbert is going with us?" he asked himself. "I don't like that man."

The persen referred to advanced and was soon in the midst of the soldiers.

"Here's to the King!" he cried, filling his glass at the counter. "We'll make short work of the French!"

The toast was responded to amid much excitement, but the frown did not depart from the youth's face.

"Only yesterday," he said to himself, "I heard Ross Gilbert berating King George, and now he is siding in with him. I'm going to watch that man."

All at once the eyes of the man and boy met. Gilbert started and came over to Sandy.

"What are you here for?" he demanded.

"I'm going with the army."

"You? With whose permission?"

"My father's and General Braddock's."

"So? Do you know where the army is going?" and Ross Gilbert drew back, his cold but piercing eyes riveted upon the boy.

"Yes, sir; it is going to find the French, wherever they are," was the reply.

"Come out here," said Gilbert, tugging at Sandy's arm. "I want to say a word or two."

They quitted the tavern and found themselves in the middle of the narrow street.

"I advise you to go home and give up this foolish exploit," began the man. "You don't want to be scalped, I know."

"I don't intend to be, if I can help it," answered Sandy, looking up into Gilbert's face.

"It's a long march for a boy like you," continued Gilbert.

"I've tramped mountain trails before, sir."

"Yes, I know you have, but we are likely not to meet the enemy this side of Fort Du Quesne."

"So I have heard the soldiers say."

"We're likely to have to fight for our lives."

"I'm ready to fight for mine."

Ross Gilbert bit his lip in vexation.

"Well, all I can say is, I hope they'll scalp you for your forwardness. Don't look to me for help, for you won't get it."

Sandy drew his lithe figure to its full height, and gave look for look. "I shan't ask you for help, Master Gilbert!" he exclaimed. "You have never been a friend

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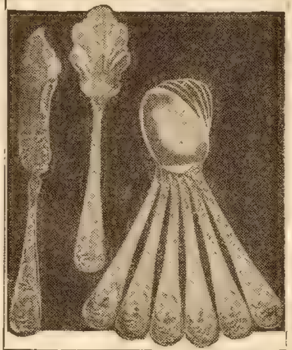

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of our family, and you will be the last man I shall look to for assistance."

"Don't show your teeth at the outset," was the angry response. "You are apt to have your comb plucked before this campaign is over."

"No thanks to you for the advice," returned Sandy, with which he turned on his heels and marched away.

"That man is with the army for no good," passed rapidly through his mind. "His sympathies are with the French, and I know it. Not able to take care of myself? We shall see, Master Gilbert. If combs are to be plucked, take care that yours is not the first."

An hour later as Sandy was strolling among the gathered wagons of the expedition, he came to a sudden halt and dropped behind one. Not far away he saw two figures outlined against the starlit sky. His heart seemed to leap into his throat when he saw that one was that of Ross Gilbert, and that the other person was a Susquehanna Indian, one of the last few of the tribe which had hunted game on Catoctin Mountain.

"Just as I thought," whispered the young soldier to himself. "Ross Gilbert is with the army for no good."

CHAPTER II.

A CLOSE CALL.

Some days elapsed before the army was enabled to set out upon its fatal expedition. Meantime Sandy made numerous acquaintances, and when the start was made he seemed to have become a general favorite.

One thing he did not forget, and that was the meeting of Ross Gilbert and the Susquehanna Indian in the camp. He believed that the white man was little better than a spy in the pay of the French, and as the redman had not been seen since that particular night, Sandy was convinced that he had been sent off through the forests to warn the enemy on the far-away banks of the Monongahela.

It was an imposing force that marched out of old Frederick toward the west. Sandy was impressed by the long lines of brilliantly uniformed men in their scarlet coats, and no less by Washington's Virginians in their blue coats. He had promised to serve in the Colonial ranks, and to this end marched with the backwoodsmen, many of whom had seen service against the red men.

"Where is your home?" said a voice at the youth's side, as he stood on the summit of Catoctin Mountain, with the beautiful valley lying beneath like a gem glistening in the sun.

"It is yonder," replied Sandy, turning to the speaker, a youth of his own age, and pointing to a bit of clear land lying at the foot of the range.

Ralph Manning followed Sandy's outstretched hand, and was silent for a minute.

"It is a beautiful vista," said he. "It reminds me of my own valley in old England. I trust I shall see it again."

"I hope you may. Yonder, right ahead of us and across the other mountain, which is called the Old South, we shall find another valley also beautiful. By and by we shall leave this region and plunge into the great forests. But let me ask you something, Master Ralph."

"Say on, Sandy."

"Is the young miss going with us?"

A smile came to young Manning's face.

"Oh, you mean Miss Dupont? Yes, she is going along. She will not desert her father who is Captain Dupont of the Royal Artillery."

"She is a brave girl!" exclaimed Sandy, who had already met the handsome English lass who had spoken to him kindly. "I trust she will escape all danger. But it looks queer to me to see the cannon which General Braddock is taking with him. Indians fight from ambush, and can shoot down the cannoneers with impunity."

"I have heard of their savage tactics, but I fancy that the big guns will give them the fright of their lives," Ralph replied. "I am glad to hear you speak so well of Miss Dupont, and you and I Sandy, will protect her at all times."

"That we will!" cried the Catoctin youth with rising enthusiasm. "We will always stand between her and danger. Ah, here comes General Braddock."

The boys stepped to one side of the trail and watched the leader of the army as he came up. He was a fine-looking man past middle age, a born general, and a man who had already served his king nobly. He halted within a few feet of the boys, and lightly held the reins of his charger. Ralph and Sandy looked on in silence.

In a few moments Ross Gilbert came up, and, saluting Braddock, motioned toward the valley.

"I have no love for that man," said Sandy in low tones to his companion.

"Nor I," replied Ralph, promptly. "To me he has an evil eye. But yesterday he tried to get into the good graces of Zella, and I am glad to say that she repulsed him."

"As she should have done," said Sandy, who understood that Zella was Miss Dupont.

"We shall meet with no opposition this side of Du Quesne," the boys now heard Gilbert say to Braddock. "The fort itself is poorly defended, and I anticipate an easy victory."

"Easy or not, sir," answered Braddock, haughtily, "I am able to sweep all opposition from my path. These French are no match for the trained army I command, and as for the red marauders of the forest, my regulars will make short work of them."

Ross Gilbert seemed to smile maliciously.

"You are sure the enemy has no spies around us?" suddenly asked the British officer, addressing Gilbert.

"I am quite sure. I have watched for such ever since I joined the army, and can say that no spying has yet seen our splendid equipment."

At this Sandy Gaver plucked Ralph's arm and whispered.

"The scoundrel! I wish I could warn General Braddock, but he has such a poor opinion of Americans that a warning I feel would be useless. I am sure Ross Gilbert is hand-in-glove with the French, and I haven't seen the Susquehanna since they were together back yonder in Frederick."

"If the two are companions," answered Ralph, "we shall know it before we see the walls of Fort Du Quesne."

At this juncture General Braddock rode down the trail, leaving Gilbert alone.

Encumbered with its long train, the army made slow progress. A road had to be cut through the forest, and now and then the men were compelled to ford streams which took their rise in the mountains. The lovely valley was at length left behind, and the redcoats began to ascend the great ridge which towered many feet above it. Night overtook the force on South Mountain.

Zella Dupont, charmed with the natural scenery, stood on a rock that overlooked the ground they had traversed during the day. Far below her position were the lights in many homes that nestled in the valley, and she compared them with fireflies such as she had seen in her own land beyond the sea.

All at once a scream rent the air, and the young girl turned pale and trembled on the rock. She had left the main camp and had wandered away without her father's leave, and now regretted her action.

In another moment she was about to spring from the bowlder and retrace her steps, but she suddenly drew back, affrighted by a pair of gleaming eyes that sent a shiver through her frame. To what those baleful orbs belonged she did not know, but she doubted not that they glittered in the head of some four-footed terror of the lonely mountain.

She was totally unarmed, and this added to her trepidation, and more than ever she regretted that she had wandered from the protecting lines of the camp.

Curious even amid her terror to see more of the possessor of the eyes, she leaned forward. In a moment she drew back with a cry of fear.

She saw all now. A long cat-like creature at the foot of the rock, a huge horror with a long tail which was moving to and fro as the eyes seemed to increase in malice. Zella had heard of the wild beasts that infested the mountains, but this was the first time she had come face to face with one.

"Heaven help me!" cried the menaced girl as she retreated the full length of the flat stone. "I must fly to camp. If I remain here the animal will make an end of me."

All at once, with another of her terrible screams, the pantheress alighted upon the rock and crouched almost at Zella's very feet. The girl could not help noticing the beauty of the beast. She remembered having seen its counterpart in the royal gardens of her own country, but she had never dreamt of encountering one amid the forests of America.

Something told Captain Dupont's daughter that the woods cat was about to spring upon her. She was now at the edge of the rock, and another step would land her on the ground, but she knew that the pantheress was as swift as thought and that she would be overtaken in a flash.

"Help! help!" rang out on the clear night air from the throat of the imperiled girl.

The animal raised her head and crept nearer. The eyes glittered more viciously than before, the silken tail was making ominous circles in the air. Suddenly this thrilling tableau was broken by the resonant crack of a firearm.

It was answered by a wild scream from the great cat, which leaped into the air, and, falling back upon the stone in the agonies of death, rolled to the ground where it lay still.

Zella Dupont seemed rooted to the stone with terror.

"I guess she's dead, miss," said a voice, as a figure came forward. "These big cats are dangerous."

Zella turned to the advancing figure and uttered a cry of joy.

"I heard the screech a while ago, and thought I would look after the cat," continued the voice, as its owner paused beside the rock and began to reload his rifle. "It's one thing to shoot a panther in the daytime, and quite another at night, but you see the eyes made a good target, and I guess it's all over with the beast."

Zella sprang from the rock and held out her hands to Sandy Gaver. "I owe you everything!" she cried. "I was foolish to quit the camp, but I wanted to see yonder lovely valley by starlight. I have seen it almost to my sorrow."

Sandy looked to the priming of his rifle and blushed to the roots of his hair.

"Maybe you'd like to have the skin of the beast for a trophy," he said, with a smile. "I can soon take it off, miss——"

"But father would learn how indiscreet I have been!" interrupted Zella. "Remember that I owe my life to you for your bravery."

"Please don't speak of it," replied Sandy, blushing again. "I like to shoot mountain cats. I will see you back to camp, and you can dream of the panther."

The beautiful English girl gave Sandy a look of thanks, and permitted him to accompany her to her father's tent.

"She's worth saving," said the Catoctin boy, as he moved away. "I don't wonder that Master Ralph thinks the world of her. I'm but a poor mountain boy, and of course she thinks of Ralph first. Well, I'll go back and take the cat's pelt for myself."

CHAPTER III.

SANDY IN THE TOILS.

At identically the same moment that Sandy rescued Zella Dupont from the claws of the mad pantheress, not far from the scene of the encounter stood a man whose figure was half concealed by

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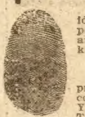

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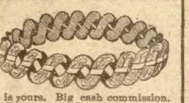

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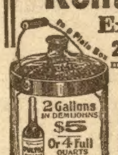

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the mountain laurel that grew everywhere. He was alone, but his keen eyes were peering from the dense shrubbery as if he wanted to screen himself from observing folk.

Ross Gilbert may or may not have heard the shot which saved the girl's life. If he did he had not investigated, for he had other pressing business on hand. Presently a footstep saluted his inner ear, and he parted the bushes and stood before a lithe Indian who grasped his hand.

"My red brother is back?" said Ross.

"Fox Tail is as swift as an arrow from a bow," was the reply. "My brother's message is on its journey."

"Good!" ejaculated Gilbert. "We are coming on excellently. The redcoats are marching to the trap and erelong there will be no King's army in the western wilderness. They have eyes, but they see not, these scarlet fools. I thought you would come, Fox Tail. We are likely to have one dangerous enemy, and that is the sharp-eyed boy who joined the Long Knives at Frederick."

The Indian tossed his head vengefully. "Does my white brother really fear the young Long Knife?" he asked.

"I can't say that I do, but he is so keen-eyed that he sees everything.

"Where is he?" Fox Tail the Susquehanna laid his hand on the hilt of his scalping knife as he concluded.

"Not yet," cried Ross Gilbert, arresting the withdrawal of the weapon. "We'll get the meddlesome boy later on. General Braddock does not suspect, and I have so wormed myself into his confidence that even if the youth should warn him, it would not shatter his trust in me."

"Good!" exclaimed the Susquehanna, and he turned and pointed down into the valley which lay at their feet. "It will be many moons before the red soldiers see the flags of the French King."

"Yes. Marching through this wilderness is toilsome work for an army. If it were not for the young Virginian, Colonel Washington, it would lose its way."

"We'll scalp the young American by and by," grinned Fox Tail.

"But not with his consent let me tell you. I know something of this young fellow Washington. But just now it's the boy I'm looking after. Let him keep his distance!"

With this the two parted, the Indian dodging through the undergrowth and Gilbert retracing his steps toward the sleeping camp.

It was a long, wearisome march over the wooded hills. The British met with many obstacles, but day after day toiled bravely on, Washington's backwoodsmen leading the advance with their senses on the alert, for they were the watchful eyes of the army.

As the days waned, Sandy Gaver and Ralph Manning were drawn closer together by ties of loyalty and friendship. Miss Dupont on more than one occasion showed her appreciation of Sandy's brave deed in saving her from the mountain cat, and whenever they met a blush would mantle the young ranger's cheeks.

The enemy's country was reached at last. Signs of Indians were found by the American scouts, and Braddock was warned. But he was bull-headed and refused to believe that the savages would attempt to oppose his disciplined forces. He thought the Indians would fight him in the open like a civilized foe, and whenever Colonel Washington ventured to express a different opinion he met with a surly rebuff.

"I am going down to the spring I discovered this morning," said Sandy to his young friend one night when the army had rested after a long march. "The early berries are ripe down there, and I will bring a mess for you."

"Be on your guard," admonished Ralph. "You know Indian signs have been plentiful of late, and——"

"Never fear for me," broke in Sandy, with a light laugh. "My eyes are the best friends I have," and the next moment he shouldered his rifle and was off.

The spring which bubbled out from beneath a huge bowlder and trickled through the forest was as clear as crystal and Sandy soon reached it. The night was so clear that he could easily discern the berry bushes that grew about the bubbling water, and, after quenching his thirst, he was soon gathering the luscious fruit.

All at once the snapping of a forest twig sounded like a rifle shot on his ear and he sprang back, reaching toward the tree where he had left his weapon. To his horror he discovered that it was not there!

As he recoiled with an exclamation of surprise, he found himself confronted by a giant Indian in the hollow of whose naked arm reposed the faithful weapon he had brought from the valley of the Cactoctin. The redskin stood in the brilliant starlight like a statue in bronze, his penetrating eyes fastened upon the boy, who for the moment seemed to have lost his head.

"White boy caught napping?" grinned the savage.

Sandy was surprised at the good English he used.

"You've surely caught me off my guard," said he, still watching the immobile warrior, "I should have been more careful."

"The best hawks will sleep sometimes," was the response. "White boy come with Flying Eagle."

This was the very last thing Sandy intended doing, but he saw that he had been taken at such a disadvantage that he was completely in the redskin's power. A thousand exciting thoughts raced through his mind.

"White boy been wanting to see the French soldiers," continued Flying Eagle. "He shall see them all."

This meant that Sandy was to become a prisoner, and when he thought of the cruelties the savages often inflicted on their captives his blood for a moment ran cold through his veins.

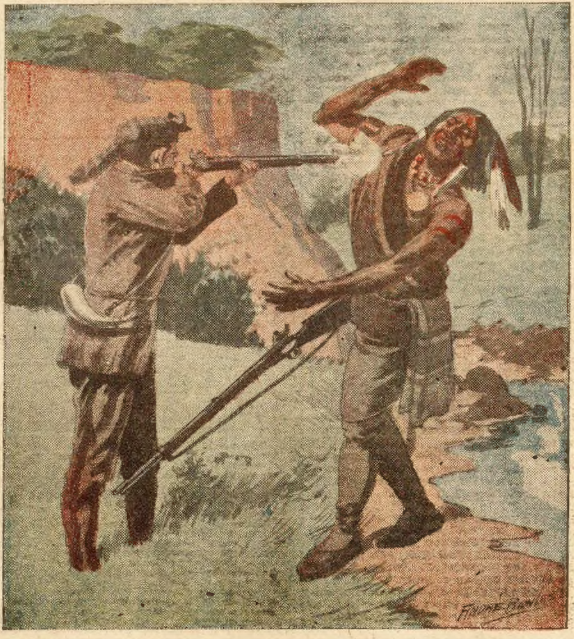
"Come!" surlily grunted the Indian, stretching out his hand. "If the young cub refuses, his scalp will hang at Flying Eagle's belt."

This threat was the end of the argument. Sandy was gripped by a hand of steel and jerked forward. The eyes of the Indian glittered like a serpent's.

"Where are the French?" asked Sandy, looking up into his captor's face.

"Not far," was the rejoinder. "White boy see 'em before long."

The berries which had been gathered



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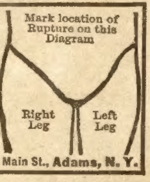

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Free **WHITE or RED**

We have made a contract with one of the big mills for a lot of woolen shawls.

We are going to give these shawls away to our readers.

The shawls are made of woolen yarn. They come in two colors, white or red. These shawls can be used in many ways; as a shoulder shawl, like that shown in the cut, or they can be used to throw over the head.

Probably nothing is so useful in a home as a shawl like this. Just the thing for changeable weather. It is very handy to throw on the head when you run into your neighbor's house. Fine to wrap the baby in. Throw it over your shoulders when sitting in a draft.

These shawls are large and well-made, and we want every reader of this paper to have one of them, so we will send you one **FREE OF ALL CHARGE,** if you will enclose $1.00 for a year's subscription to this paper.

We send the shawl all charges prepaid. Be sure to state whether you want white or red in the proper space below.

This is a splendid offer, and we are glad to be able to distribute these shawls among our readers.

We treat old and new subscribers alike on this splendid offer. If you are already a subscriber say so when you write, and we will have your new subscription commence when the old one expires.

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were scattered on the ground, and Sandy was really a prisoner.

"I'll watch my chance," thought the youth. "I have no notion of going to the French fort as a captive, and if Flying Eagle will just relax his vigilance for a second he is likely to lose a prisoner."

But the Indian did not seem likely to oblige Sandy Gaver, for he held him in a viselike grip as they almost ran through the forest flecked by patches of starlight in many places.

They had put a mile between them and the spot of the capture before the savage appeared to draw breath. When he paused he looked down at Sandy with a quizzical smile at his lips.

"Boy tired?" he grunted.

"No, I'm not tired," answered Sandy. "Aren't we near the fort?"

"Fort close," was the answer.

The redskin still carried the boy's rifle in addition to his own, but with such ease that the two weapons did not discommode him in the least.

"What's that yonder?" suddenly queried Sandy, pointing over the Indian's shoulder.

The ruse was successful. Flying Eagle, relaxing his grip a trifle, turned halfway round. It cost him his life. The next instant Sandy had jerked loose, and at the same time had recovered his rifle.

Never before had a wily redskin been so taken by surprise. Flying Eagle seemed to recover in a flash, but as he started forward a weapon spat fire in his face, and he dropped in his tracks.

"Now, good legs!" cried the Catochin lad to himself. "I'll have news for General Braddock when I get back to camp."

The boy was off like a startled deer, but he had not made a dozen springs ere the forest behind him resounded with the wildest yells. These only served to increase his speed, and Sandy shot over the ground with at least twenty painted warriors at his heels.

He had learned one trick on the Maryland farm, and that was how to load his rifle when running. It was a trick not possessed by many, but he had practiced it until he had become adept at it, and now he put his skill to use. He rammed down the bullet as he bounded on, looked to the priming of his weapon, and harbored his strength for the final outcome.

On came the howling horde. Sandy doubted not that they had discovered the dead body of Flying Eagle, for the terrible yells that made the welkin ring were deafening, and, by looking over his shoulder whenever he reached an open spot, he saw the rushing forms of his foes.

At last he halted and threw his rifle to his shoulder. Not twenty yards away was the giant figure of the foremost redskin. The shot rang out above the hideous cries of the savages, and a human figure leaped into the air and fell back quivering on the ground.

Sandy turned and hastened on. All at once he sprawled on the leaves, for his foot had caught a hidden ground creeper, and he was thrown.

On his feet a second later, he turned to resume his flight. A tomahawk whizzed past his head, he felt the cold wind of it, and as he looked at the enemy he beheld a sight that made his young blood run cold.

This thrilling story of youtnful adventure will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. A lot of strange and exciting things happen. Read it. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you if you send in a year's subscription. It costs only $1.00 and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

Mistletoemaine.

"A Christmas dinner isn't a very digestible meal," said Dr. Henry C. Higgins, the noted dietitian of Duluth, in one of his lectures.

"Plum pudding and mince pie are meals in themselves. Therefore, consumed on top of two or three pounds of turkey, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes and creamed onions and canned corn and peas, pudding and pie are likely to make trouble.

"There's many a severe illness due to Christmas gluttony that is given some high-sounding name to gratify the vanity of the patient.

"A fat old lady lay groaning in her bed the morning after Christmas; her hands clutched her stomach in agony.

"'Oh, doctor,' she groaned on my appearance, 'is it ptomaine poisoning, do you think?'

"'Madame,' I answered, 'mistletoemaine poisoning would be nearer the mark.'"

* * *

His Shining Gift.

"Sweetheart," he began, passionately, as she opened the door to him on Christmas afternoon. "I have come to offer you my little token of a merry Christmas. I want you, when you wear it, to consider it as a symbol of my love. Let it bind us closely together. Dearest, pray accept this little gift. I am sure it will fit your finger."

She took the small box with trembling hands, giving him an altogether adoring look and nestling closer, her heart palpitating. At last he had made good! Oh, ten million joys! Then ten million more!

Eagerly she lifted the cover, and her eyes met the bright, shining brilliancy of a beautiful—silver thimble!—Puck.

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I want to send you a **complete ten days' treatment entirely free** to prove to you that you can cure yourself at home easily, quickly **and surely.** Remember, **that it will cost you nothing** to give the treatment a complete trial; **if you** should wish to continue, it will cost you only about 12 cts. a week, or less than 2 cts. a day. It will not interfere with your work or occupation. **Just send me your name and address,** tell me how you suffer if you wish, and I will send you the treatment for your case, entirely free, in plain wrapper, by return mail. I will also send you **free of cost,** my book—**"WOMAN'S OWN MEDICAL ADVISER"** with explanatory illustrations showing why women **suffer, and** how they can easily cure themselves at home. Every woman should have it, and **learn to think for herself.** Then when the doctor says—"You must have an operation," you **can decide** for yourself. Thousands of women have cured themselves with my home remedy. **It cures all, old or young. To Mothers of Daughters,** I will explain a simple home treatment which speedily and effectually cures the results of colds, irregularities and ailments peculiar to young ladies. Plumpness and health always result from its use.

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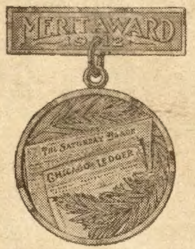
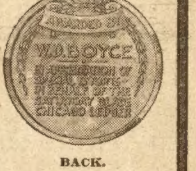


FRONT (ACTUAL SIZE.)

This Medal Free to Our Agents for Good Work



BACK.

This Medal is 14-K. polished plate Roman finish, solid and heavy, consisting of a bar and pendant made just like the U. S. Army Medals.

This Medal is free, besides the big money we pay our agents each week for delivering the Blade and Ledger. We need agents in every town and R. F. D. all over the world to deliver the Blade and Ledger to old customers and get new customers. We pay them well. Thousands of our agents

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THE FAIRY CORNER

THE CHILD'S CHRISTMAS TOY.

By Eugene Field.

"Tell me, my little golden-head,
  If Santa Claus comes tonight,
  What shall he bring my baby bright,
What treasure for my boy," I said.

And then he named the little toy,
  While in his honest, mournful eyes
  There came back a look of sweet surprise,
That spoke his quiet, trustful joy.

And as he lisped his evening prayer,
  He asked the boon with childish grace,
  Then toddling to the chimney-place,
He hung his little stocking there.

That night, as lengthening shadows crept,
  I saw the white-winged angles come
  With heavenly music to our home,
And kiss my darling as he slept.

They must have heard his baby prayer,
  For in the morn, with smiling face,
  He toddled to the chimney-place,
And found the little treasure there.

◆

STOLEN GIFTS.

Tommy Morris sat in the manger of his father's stable, while Biddy, his little white bantam, ate grains of wheat from his hand.

"Think, Biddy!" said Tommy. "Tomorrow is Christmas, and tonight I'll hang up my stocking. Santa Claus is coming."

The door of the adjoining stable opened, and through the cracks Tommy saw the round red heads of his young neighbors, Policeman Hennesey's sons.

Tommy sat still. He and the young Henneseys were not good friends. He hoped that they would feed their pig and go away without knowing that he was there.

Pretty soon he heard the younger Hennesey say: "That was shure a fine letter ye writ to ould Santy. The wurruk of it must have fair sprained yer head, Mickey. Just read it again, won't you?"

"All right," returned Mickey unfolding a piece of dirty, crumpled paper, "but ye'll have to shell the pig's corn if I do."

Tommy had been taught that eavesdropping was wrong; so he closed his eyes and stopped his ears, but this is what he heard:

"Dear Santy Claws—We air seven pore orfings that live in pleeceman henneseys stable an' we hop youl bring us sum presents or me little bruthers harts will be broke we like kandy, toyes, oranges an everythin cum early before you goes anywhere else so no more at presen from seven pore orfings."

"Are ye shure we can overpower 'im?" inquired Patsey, as his brother refolded the letter. "Ye see, he's bound to thrip of the dure, an' sind his pack a-tumblin', an' thin——"

And then Tommy's round, gray eyes grew yet more round with horror as he listened to the dark plot unfolded by Mick and Patsey. What villainy! Who would have believed that so much rascality and cunning lurked within those round red heads. Tommy could scarcely believe his ears. The Henneseys were going to decoy Santa into the stable by means of the letter, rob him of his pack, and, if he resisted, perhaps murder him.

Tommy put Biddy down and made for the house as fast as his fat little legs could carry him. He shook out the dime, which was all the money he had, and then he hurried out and boarded a street car. He felt that there was not a moment to be lost.

"I never did tell on them before," he reflected, "no matter what they did to me. I don't like to be a tattler, but this is too awful to keep.

"Let me off here, Mr. Conductor," he said, politely, as he caught sight of Mr. Hennesey, just outside the police station. Hurrying up to the astonished gentleman, he told him of the crime contemplated by his sons.

"You know your two boys, Mr. Hennesey!" he began, breathlessly. "You know Patsey and Mickey! Well, they have got up a plan to rob Santa Claus! They've wrote him a letter telling him they are seven poor orphans that live in your stable, so that he'll be sorry for them, and when he comes he'll trip over their string, an' if he don't give 'em his pack without any fuss I 'spect they'll kill him!" And the tears rolled down Tommy's plump cheeks.

"The spalpeens! An' who would have belaved it of 'em?" cried their indignant father. "See here, Bub," he said kindly as he handed Tommy a bright, new silver quarter, "jist do you go home an' rist aisy. I'll see that they don't harrum ould Santy, an' jist kape yer eye on the stable this night an' see what happens."

Christmas Eve Tommy retired early, but not to sleep. Wrapped in the bed clothing, with his small nose flattened against the frosty pane, he watched the Hennesey stable, and this is what he saw:

First, two young Henneseys, heavily armed, stole forth and entered the stable.

Soon afterward there came a tall, oddly dressed person carrying a pack. Tommy supposed that this must be Santa Claus and yet he did not look as Tommy had expected Santa Claus to look; neither did his bundle look like Santa Claus' pack.

While he was thinking of this he heard earsplitting howls and he saw this strange Santa Claus throw aside his pack, gather up two frightened red-haired boys and spank them soundly, and then roll them in the snow.

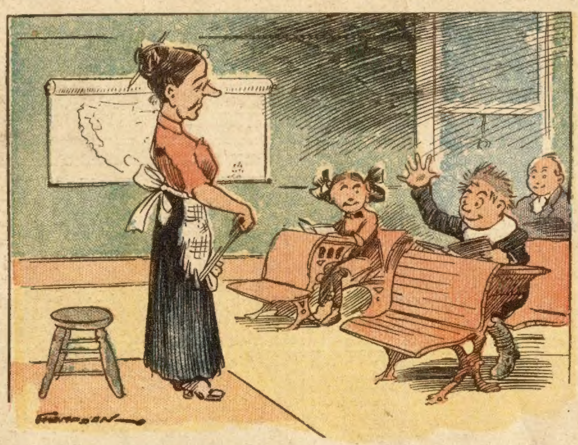
As Mickey and Patsey fled to the safe haven of their mother's kitchen, Tommy saw Santa Claus pick up his strange pack and fling it in the Hennesey stable and go chuckling away.

The next morning Tommy, peering through a crack in the Hennesey stable, noted, with astonishment, that the queer pack was only a large bundle of tough willow switches, but he told no one about them.

That afternoon, in their mother's absence, the two young Henneseys industriously chopped up those switches and burned them in the kitchen stove, but they said nothing about them.

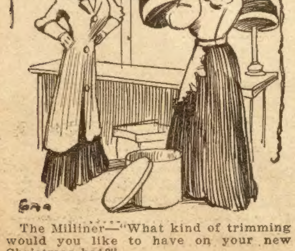
On Christmas morning, when Mr. Hennesey gave them a few toys, he remarked grimly: "Here's some things yer mother bought for ye. I suppose old Santy was too busy lookin' afther poor orfings to think of yez"—but he said no word of switches.

Mrs. Hennesey knew nothing of her sons' wicked scheme, and of course she said nothing about the switches. So the secret of the Christmas hold-up was pretty well kept—for a secret.



The Teacher—"To put an end to this continual disorder every one who talks or whispers will have to stay an hour after school."

Little Jimmie—"We've got a game on for tomorrow. Can't we stay two hours this afternoon an' get off tomorrow?"



The Milliner—"What kind of trimming would you like to have on your new Christmas hat?"

Miss Passe—"Real mistletoe and lots of it."

◆

Santa Claus.

Santa Claus is no relation to St. Nicholas, though his name is often confounded with that of the holy patron of children.

Santa Claus is a sort of modern, and somewhat pagan saint. He is jolly, as if he lived well, and is always smiling.

His name came originally from the Dutch who had some difficulty in saying St. Nicholas—or St. Nicholaus, as they spell it—and so shortened it to saint, or Santa Claus, the last word being in part the last syllable of the saint's name.

Santa Claus is better known in America, perhaps, than in any other country. He has no place in any list of saints, though his sole business is doing good.

He is believed to live at the North Pole, though Peary saw nothing of him there. He travels with reindeers, but sometimes by auto or aeroplane.

Kris Kringle, or Kris Kinkle, are names sometimes given Santa Claus. This comes from careless speech on the part of the Germans, just as the name of Santa Claus comes from the careless Dutch.

In German Christ-Kindlein means Christ Child, the giver of all gifts. Kris Kinkle is easier to say, perhaps, and so from Christ Child we get the nickname by which our modern Santa Claus is sometimes called.

◆

The Christmas Stocking.

The Christmas stocking as generally known is one taken from the bureau supply for daily wear. In certain parts of the country, however, the Christmas stocking is never in use except to be "hung from the chimney with care." The New England stocking of this kind is usually long in the leg and knitted from woolen yarn. There are stockings on Cape Cod which have been used by four generations of children. Once emptied of their treasure on Christmas morning, they are rolled up and marked and laid away for the next year's festivities.

◆

MISS MERRYWORKER.

Sing a song of sunshine, a merry little maid
Learns to like the housework—not a bit afraid.
When the day is sultry—no air in the house—
Goes into the garden, demure as any mouse.
Polishes the saucers, teapot, cups and plate;
Handles them all carefully, early works and late.
Don't you want a maiden, merry little worker,
Come to live in your house instead of Mistress Shirker?

◆

The Largest Book.

The world's largest book is being manufactured for a Chinese medical firm, and it will contain all of the testimonials regarding their goods. The book will weigh twelve hundred pounds, be one foot thick when closed, and its dimensions when open will be three feet and one-half by seven. There will be a specially constructed table for the huge volume.

◆

There are lots of funny things to be seen in this world, and among them is a fat woman sitting on a little piano stool.

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